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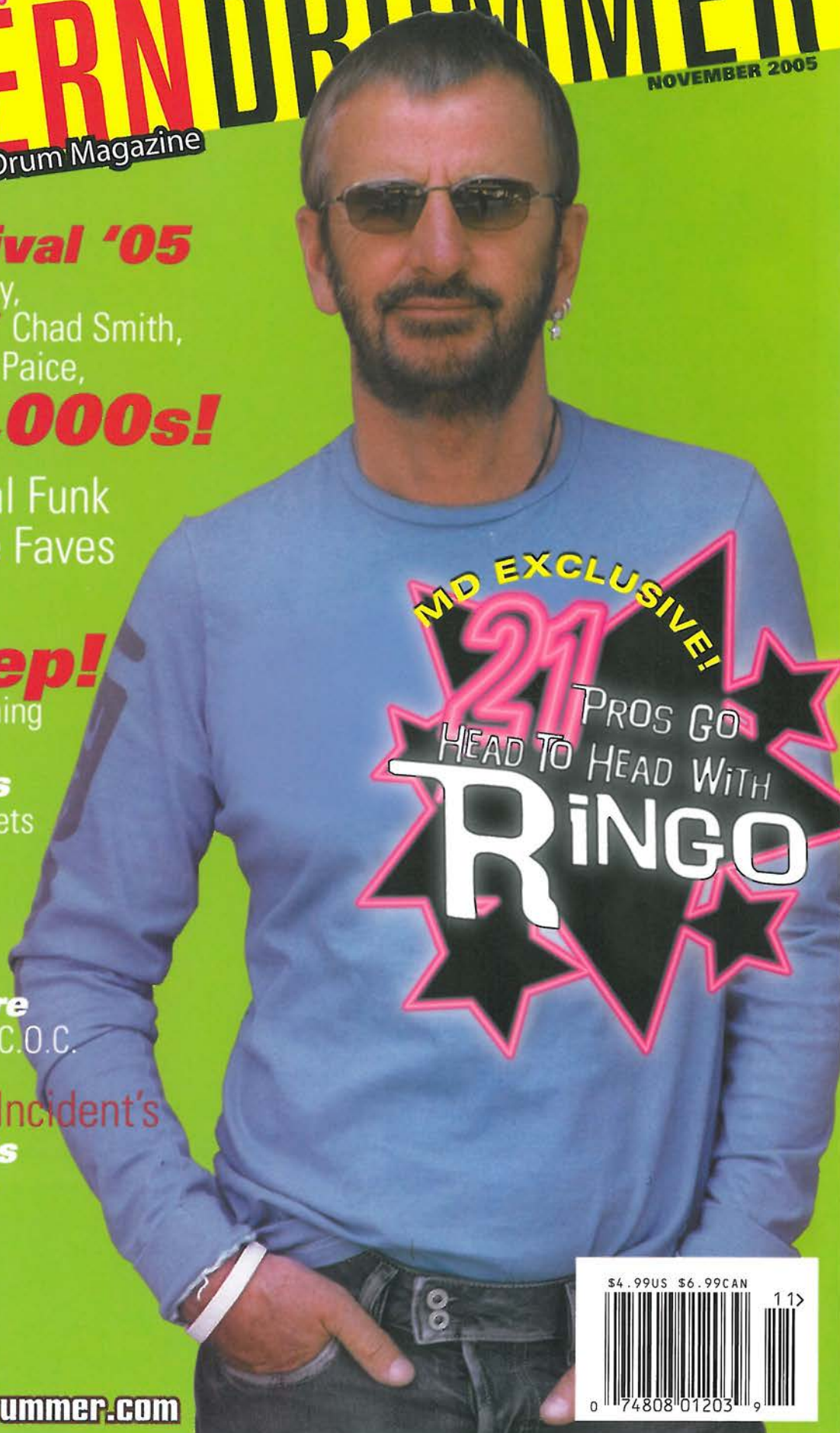

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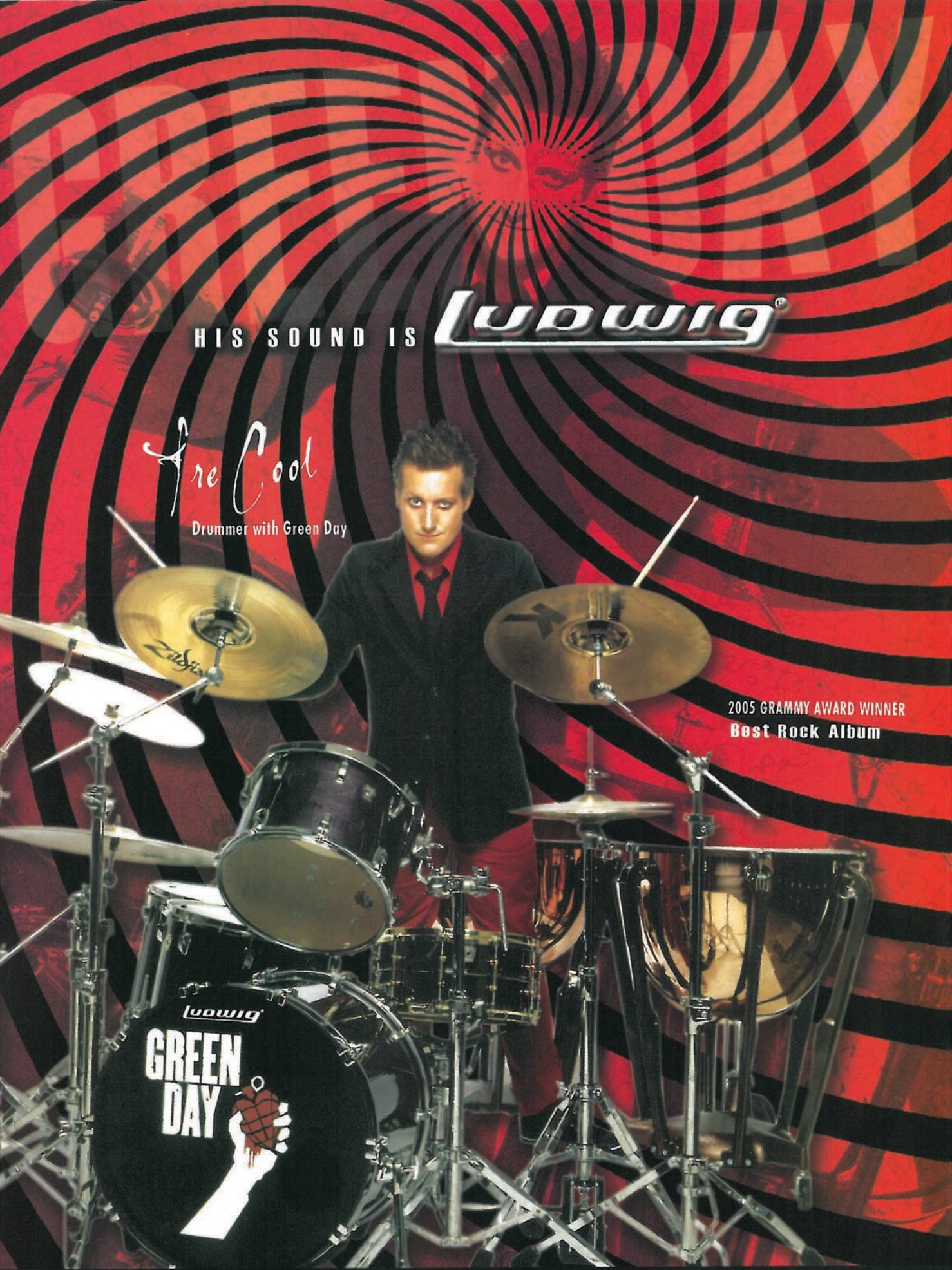


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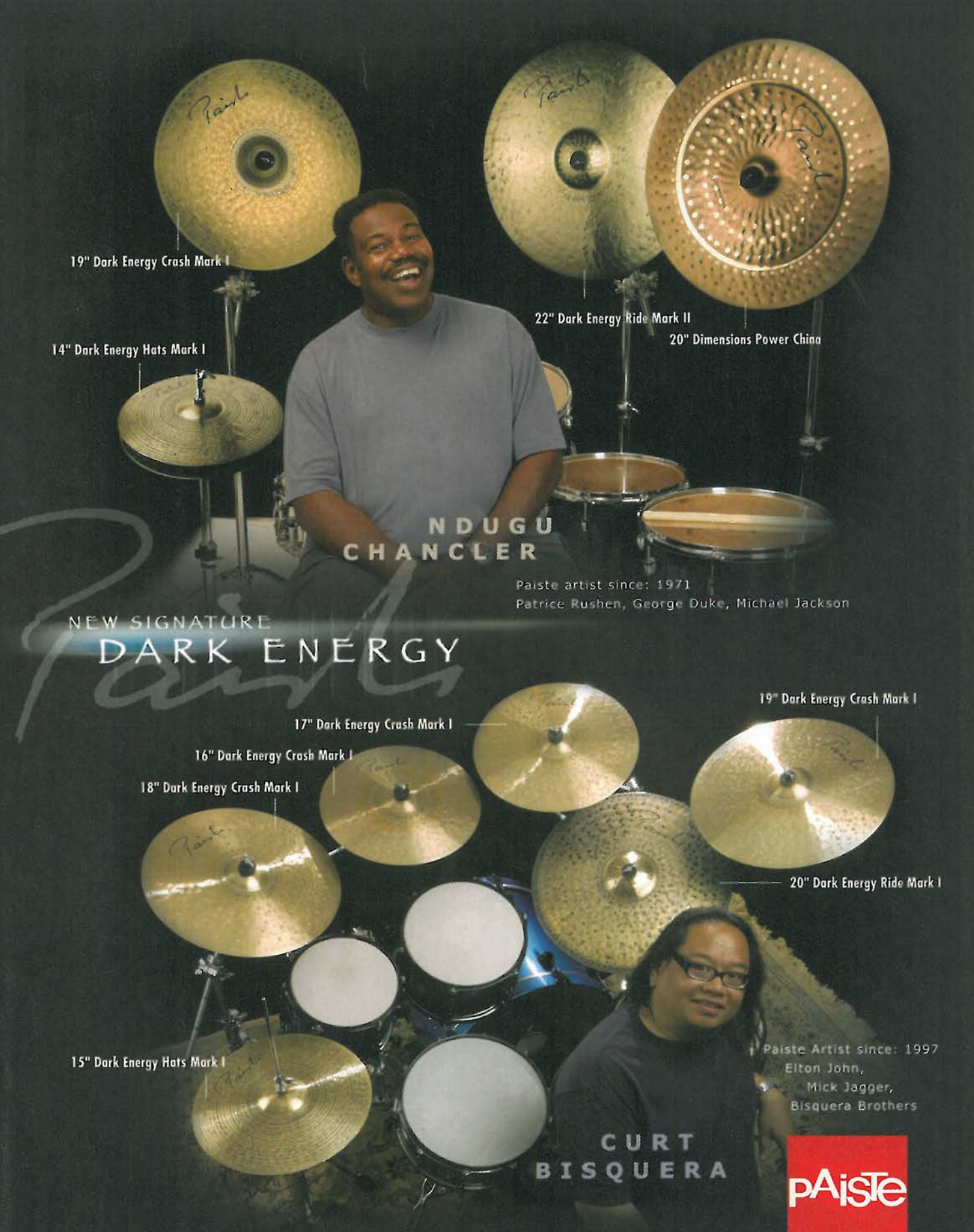


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# Contents

Alex Solca
64

Cover photo by Henry Diltz

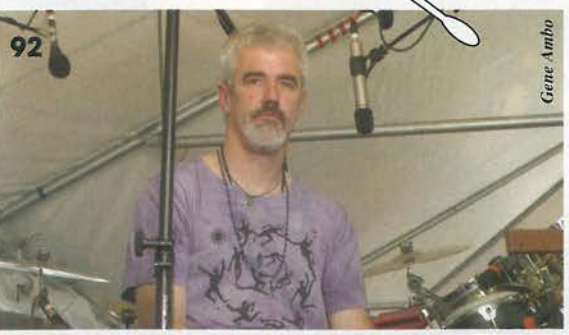
Volume 29, Number 11

**38** Modern Drummer's **Festival Weekend 2005**
An amazing new venue, a super-talented lineup, and a few thousand fanatic drummers. MD Fest is back! by Mike Haid and T. Bruce Wittet

**64 Ringo Starr**
Ringo and The Beatles—could there really be anything new to say? Well, here's a unique take: *MD* asked twenty-one of today's top drummers to ask Ringo any questions they wished. Remember, you read it here first! by Billy Amendola

**80** Alicia Keys' **Paul John Jr.**
Grammy-winning R&B singer Alicia Keys loves to take musical chances. Good thing for her, drummer Paul John Jr. has got her back. by Robyn Flans

**92** String Cheese Incident's **Michael Travis**
Playing that hippie bluegrass jamming thing is no stroll through the park—especially when you're as ambitious a player as Michael Travis. Plus a sidebar with percussionist Jason Hann. by Robin Tolleson


92
Gene Ambo

80
Paul La Raia

**22** Update
Jack Johnson's **Adam Topol**

Guided By Voices' **Kevin March**

Avishai Cohen's **Mark Guiliana**

High On Fire's **Des Kensel**

Fusion Burner **Sean Rickman**

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MD's 2005 Consumer's Poll Results
The companies, products, and ads that knocked you out most this past year.

28

## Education


**102** Rock Perspectives
**Afrobeat Pioneer Tony Allen: Style & Analysis**
by Bill Carbone

**104** Around The World
**Indian Rhythms: An Intro For Western Drummers, Part 1**
by Steve Smith

**106** Off The Record
**The Ringo Fill: Reflections On Leading With The Left Hand**
by Ed Breckenfeld

**108** Rock 'N' Jazz Clinic
**Double Bass Drumming Part 12: Fill/Solo Accent Patterns**
by Rod Morgenstein

**110** Rock Charts
**Stanton Moore: Corrosion Of Conformity's "Stone Breaker"**
Transcribed by Stanton Moore

**114** Concepts
**Under Siege: Passing A Drumming IQ Test**
by Billy Ward

**118** In The Pocket
**Blues Drumming: Beyond The Beats**
by Mike Sandler

**124** Taking Care Of Business
**Building A Fan Base Part 3: Assembling A Team**
by Darren Pujalet

**128** Essential Listening
**Funk: Ten Indispensable Long-Players**
by Jeff Schaller

134

## Departments


**8** An Editor's Overview
**Festival Wrap-Up**
by Rick Van Horn

**10** Readers' Platform

**14** It's Questionable
**Pearl World Series Drums • Solving A Squeak Problem • Using Different Tools • "Oh What A Night" Drummer**

**18** Ask A Pro
**Chicago's Tris Imboden On Overcoming Anxiety • Studio Master Rick Marotta's Cymbal Choices • Technical Tips From Nashville Great Eddie Bayers**

**146** Showcase

**160** Critique

**170** Drum Market
**Including Vintage Corner**

**176** Backbeats
**Street Drum Corps At Warped Tour • PASIC 2005 Preview • and more**

**182** On The Move

**184** Kit Of The Month


## Equipment


**28** Product Close-Up
**Pacific Drums & Percussion LXE Kit • Paiste PST3 And PST5 Cymbals, Rude Thin Crashes, And Signature Dark Energy Splashes • Off-Set Double Bass Drum Pedal • Rim Riser**

**134** New And Notable

160

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# Festival Wrap-Up

When I wrote my *Editor's Overview* in the February 2004 *MD* explaining why there would be no Modern Drummer Festival Weekend in 2004, I closed with the promise that the show would be back, bigger and better than ever. I'm here to tell you, the 2005 Festival made good on that promise.

Bigger? Well, we moved to the 2,700-seat, five-balcony New Jersey Performing Arts Center. Artists, sponsors, and audience members alike were literally awed by the size and beauty of this new facility.

Better than ever? No fewer than *seventeen* world-class drummers and percussionists graced our stage over two days. The performances were unparalleled, the quality of the sound was universally lauded, and the $25,000 worth of door prizes included four complete drum-kits. You be the judge.

This issue carries our pictorial coverage of the Festival, as well as front-of-house and behind-the-scenes reporting from T. Bruce Wittet and Mike Haid. We hope they will give you a taste of the excitement, the camaraderie, and the overall vibe of the show. And for a total-immersion experience, don't miss the spectacular DVD of the Festival. For more information, see the ad on page 144 of this issue or go to www.moderndrummer.com.

Of course, if you *really* want to get the full impact of a Modern Drummer Festival Weekend, there's just no substitute for being there yourself. And with that in mind, I'm happy to report that the date for the 2006 show has already been set. It will take place on September 16-17, once again at NJPAC. This move from our traditional May date will help us to avoid conflicts with summer touring schedules when it comes to booking artists. (And we'll also avoid the Memorial Day Weekend issues that prevented some people from attending the 2005 show.)

All of us at *MD* want to thank the artists, the sponsors, the NJPAC staff, and all of the wonderful volunteer workers who helped to make the 2005 Festival such a success. We'll savor the moment for a few months, and then we'll go back to work, planning ways to make the 2006 show even more spectacular. It'll be a challenge, but we're looking forward to it!

MODERN DRUMMER

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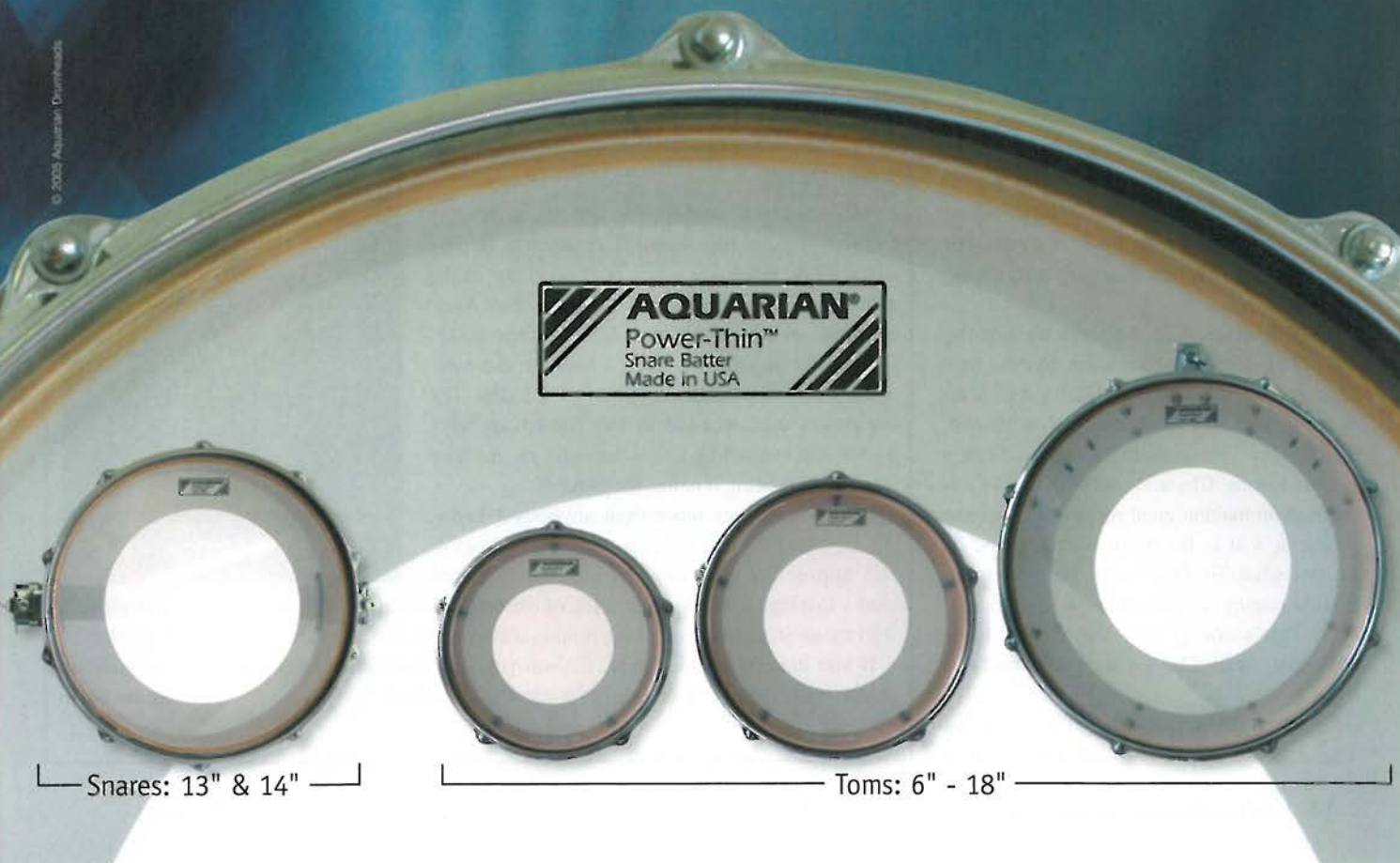

## Roy Haynes

After many years as a *Modern Drummer* reader, I almost let my subscription lapse because I thought that the content of the magazine had passed me by. Then I got the August issue with Roy Haynes as the featured cover artist, and I enjoyed it very much.

Needless to say, I renewed my subscription. After all, if a sixteen-year-old kid can read an article about guys like Roy Haynes, I can read an article about Joey Jordison or any other young gun.

Thanks again, *MD*. You always seem to come through.

**John Nokovic**

## Audix Spotlight

As a twenty-plus-year subscriber, I have enjoyed many great issues. The latest direction of *MD* has really got me excited. When you include articles such as the "Spotlight" on Audix, it brings an entirely new view to the magazine—one that borders on a reference guide, with insight to a product that may improve one's performance. Thank you. **Michael White**

## MD Readers Poll

I am truly honored to be in the incredible company of the *MD* Readers Poll winners for 2005. Thank you for listening and caring enough to vote.

As I've said before, I always try to bring something different to a session, like the little changes I always heard Hal Blaine, John Guerin, and Ron Tutt bring to a record. That's why I've included a picture from a recent Kenny Chesney session. Kenny is focused on making great records that portray where he's at in his musical career, and he knows what his fans want. He gets more mature, caring, and thankful with each success. That's exactly how I've wanted to be my entire career. Thank you again. **Paul Leim**

Thanks to the *MD* readers for selecting *The Jazz Drummer's Workshop* as best book in this year's Readers Poll. Thanks, also, for your votes for me in the big band category. **John Riley**

I was elated to see Stewart Copeland in the Readers Poll Hall Of Fame this year. I encourage *MD* readers of all ages to continue to do your homework before you vote by investigating groundbreaking innovators like Stewart—and those who came before him—who have made historical contributions to the art of drumming.

Players who have captivated and influenced past, present, and future generations of drummers should be the first to be remembered with this prestigious honor. Here are a few to Google: Baby Dodds, Chick Webb, Earl Palmer, Hal Blaine, Shelly Manne, Mitch Mitchell, Ian Paice, Bernard Purdie, Jack DeJohnette, Zigaboo Modeliste, David Garibaldi, Rod Morgenstein, Tommy Aldridge, Lenny White, Harvey Mason, and the collective drummers of Motown. **Mike Haid**

## Jeremy Colson

I really enjoyed reading the article on Jeremy Colson in your July issue. I've known Jeremy since 1999, when we were both working at the same music store in the San Francisco Bay Area. Starting several years ago, Jeremy kept disappearing for months on end to become the awesome, in-demand drummer that he is today. The drummers who worked at our store were very proud and excited to know that one of our own was really making a name for himself.

Jeremy practices more than anybody I know, and despite his great success, he remains humble and appreciative. It amazes me that a person who's touring the world with some of the best musicians alive is still not above working a shift in our store in his off time, renting a clarinet to a soccer mom and her fifth grader!

If you haven't heard Jeremy Colson yet, you should. He is as passionate a musician as you will ever see, and a hell of a good guy to know.

**Spike Klein**
General Manager, The Magic Flute
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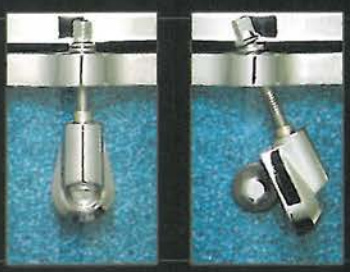

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## MD FESTIVAL WEEKEND 2005

The 2005 Festival topped all previous shows. Where else could you see a show start with a fourteen-year-old chops monster and end with an eighty-years-young drum legend? Each performance was a showstopper, and each performer shared words of wisdom.

To Isabel Spagnardi and the staff at *Modern Drummer*: You are the best! The 2005 Festival was worth waiting for! A beautiful room, easy access with the parking, and tremendous performers—all for a low price. That's why you pack them in every year. Congratulations on a job well done. **Rick Lawton**

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for making the Festival Weekend so wonderful for my wife and me. It was an absolute honor to perform. Hopefully I would have made Ron Spagnardi proud! **Jason Bittner**

My wife, Anne, and I have just returned home from two marvelous days of fun, music, and education at the MD Festival. We are members of the now defunct 3:30 Club, and while the camaraderie we experienced while waiting in line in those early morning hours will be sorely missed, the trade-off we now have with the new venue and all its wonderful creature comforts—as well as a tremendous sound system—is well worth it.

Our hats go off to everyone at *Modern Drummer*. I think we speak for most Festival attendees when we say, "A good time was had by all." **Mike Totaro**

I would like to thank you all very much for having me at the Modern Drummer Festival Weekend. I only wish I had had more time to spend with you all. Thank you for taking such good care of me. Best wishes to all. **Karl Perazzo**

I've said for years that I was going to go to the MD Festival. This year I finally treated myself and made it to both days. *Man*—what have I missed? I went home extremely fired up after those two days. I look forward to the DVD this fall, and to attending next year with fellow drummers that I told about the show. We'll be there! **James A. Mack Sr.**

We would like to extend our gratitude to all the wonderful people of *Modern Drummer* for inviting us to perform at the 2005 MD Festival Weekend. We would also like to thank all the incredible drummers who performed—especially those who stopped by just to say hello to us. There are too many of you to name, but you know who you are. Your musicianship and genuine spirit of camaraderie humble and inspire us. Thank you all for the experience of a lifetime. We hope to see all our new friends again at the 2006 Festival. **The NYPD Drumline**

I'd never been to an MD Festival before, and I had a fantastic experience. Meeting Jason Bittner...shooting the breeze with Chris Adler out in the lobby...*wow*. **Tony Menendez**

My wife, Debbie, and I would like to say thank you once again for everything at the fabulous Modern Drummer Festival. My Editors Achievement Award is in a prominent place in my house. No one can miss it! Thank you again for such an honor. **Walfredo Reyes Sr.**

The talent on display over the two days of the Festival was astounding. I know Ron would be pleased and proud at what took place. I'm glad you saw fit to keep going, and I look forward to many more years of great shows. **Jerome Deupree**

My fourteen-year-old son Matt and I were first-timers, and we were blown away all weekend. From Eloy's opening rampage, to Rodney's rhythm, Kirk's attack, Jojo's style, and Roy's "coolness," the entire Festival was awesome.

The performers' messages of inspiration and guidance are having quite an impact on Matt, who is working harder than ever to change his "undiscovered" status. Thanks again to the artists and to everyone at *MD*. **Jim Wilkinson**

I was only able to attend the Festival on Saturday, but I would have been back if I could. The day's artists were too awesome for me to explain to others who were not there. At the age of fifty-two I am re-inspired. I sat second row center. If I made it onto the DVD, you'll recognize me by the enormous grin on my face.

All of you at *MD* do more than turn out a great publication and present great Festivals. You touch—and perhaps, in some cases, change—peoples' lives. I may be one of those lucky people. I can't thank you enough. **Barry Hausman**

Thank you, thank you, thank you for the wonderful weekend I spent at NJPAC with all of you and all those great drummers. It was a great experience. Please...for 2006, make it twice! **Tano D'Antonio**
Italy

### Help For A Fellow Drummer

Paul Romaine is one of Denver's top drummers. His daughter Erienne was hospitalized recently due to malformed blood vessels in her brain, and she will need future medical procedures. The family has already incurred many thousands of dollars in medical expenses, with many more coming, and they have no insurance. They can use any financial assistance that can be provided.

Donations may be mailed to Denver Musicians Association, 1165 Delaware St., Denver, CO 80204. Checks should be made payable to "Denver Musicians Association," with "Erienne Romaine" on the memo line.

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## Pearl World Series Drums

**Where did the World drumkit series fall in the hierarchy of Pearl drums? Entry level...mid-price...top of the line? I just got a nine-piece double-bass kit in mint condition, with hard-shell cases, for $300! Only the bass drum hoops have a little damage, since the rubber gaskets were missing. I'd like to know if this was as good a deal as it seems.** **Ivan Diaz**

Ivan, it sounds as if you got a *great* deal. We received the following information from Pearl product specialist Gene Okamoto.

"The WX/WLX World series was introduced in 1986 as a mid-level line. WLX models featured a high-gloss lacquer finish, while WX models were covered. Both featured 8-ply shells: two plies of linden (inside), five plies of mahogany (in the middle), and one outer ply of birch.

"The World series has had quite an evolution since then. In 1991, it became the SLX Prestige Session Elite. That series had 7-ply shells: birch outside, mahogany in the middle, and lamin inside. A jazz sub-series called the Prestige Session Jazz retained the WLX designation.

"In 1994, the SLX became the SPX Prestige Session, with the same shells as the SLX. In 1997, the SPX became the SRX Prestige Session Select, which featured 7-ply shells: maple inside and outside, mahogany in the middle.

"In 2001, the SRX became the SRX Session Custom, featuring 6-ply 100% maple shells. In 2004, the SRX became the SMX Session Custom featuring 6-ply 100% maple shells. All of these kits have retained their position as mid-price models within the overall Pearl lines."

## Using Different Tools

**Lately I've been playing with a brush in my right hand on my snare drum and a stick in my left hand leading on a ride. What other drummers in history have used this combination?** **Dave Kingsland**

If you're referring to your left-hand lead, drummers like Billy Cobham, Simon Phillips, Lenny White, Rayford Griffin, and Carter Beauford are known for playing that way.

If you're referring to the use of different tools in your two hands, that's quite a common practice. Show and "pit" drummers very frequently work with one tool in one hand and a different tool in the other. This can often include playing a mallet instrument with one hand and drums or percussion with the other.

Drummers who play in lounges, small clubs, and other locations where volume is an issue often use a light stick or rod on the ride cymbal or hi-hat, and a brush on the drums. It's basically a matter of using whatever tools are required to get the job done within a musical context.

*Illustration by Joseph King*

## Solving A Squeak Problem

**I've had a DW 9002 double bass drum pedal for about a year. It's beginning to squeak in one of the joints where the arm connects to the left pedal. I've tried some powdered lubricant, but it doesn't seem to be working. Should I use some type of oil?**

**Although this isn't a life-threatening issue, it is really annoying to hear the squeaking while I'm playing. I'd love to find a solution.** **Kent**

DW customer service supervisor Brandon Pierce recommends applying a small amount of Chain Kote. It's a lubricant/protectant made by Kal Guard, and it can be obtained at most automotive retailers. If the squeaking persists, you can contact Brandon directly at BrandonP@dwdrums.com.

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## "Oh What A Night" Drummer

**I'm trying to find out who played drums on the very popular mid-1970s song "(December 1963) Oh What a Night." It was recorded by Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons. I've been Googling for over two hours with no results. Can you help?**

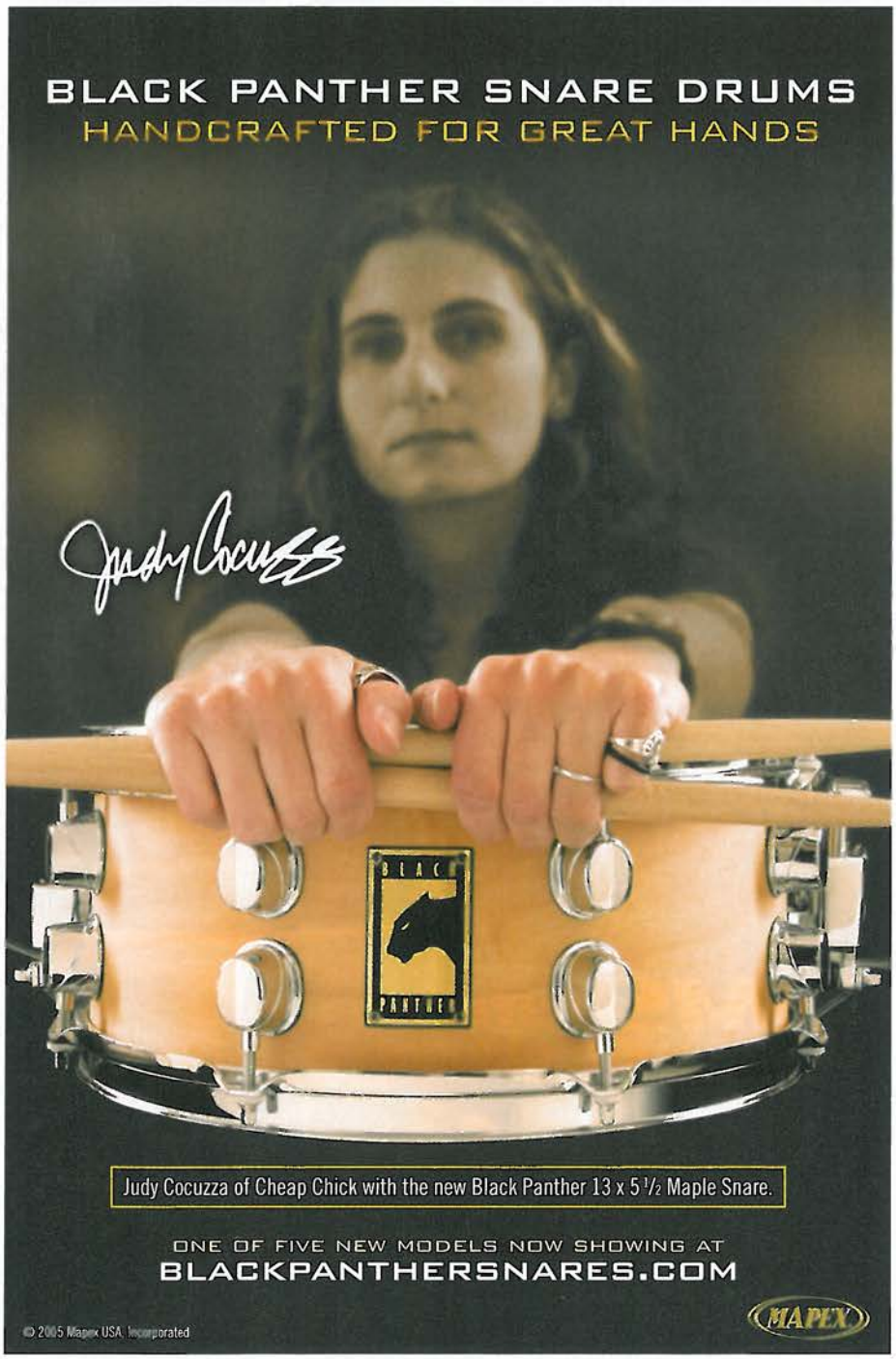
**Jeff Bak**

We referred your question to drummer and R&B guru Zoro. Besides being a wealth of historical information himself, he toured with Frankie Valli for several years in the 1990s. Zoro responds, "The drummer's name is Jerry Pollci. He was a member of the newer version of The Four Seasons in the '70s. Not only did he play drums on that song, he was also the lead singer. Frankie only comes in on vocals on some of the verses. Jerry sings the hook and the lead.

"Jerry is married to Frankie Valli's oldest daughter. As far as I know, he's currently teaching music in school music programs in New Jersey. He's a really cool guy."

**Questions For MD's Drum Experts?**

Send them to It's Questionable, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, or rvh@moderndrummer.com. Please include your full name with your question.

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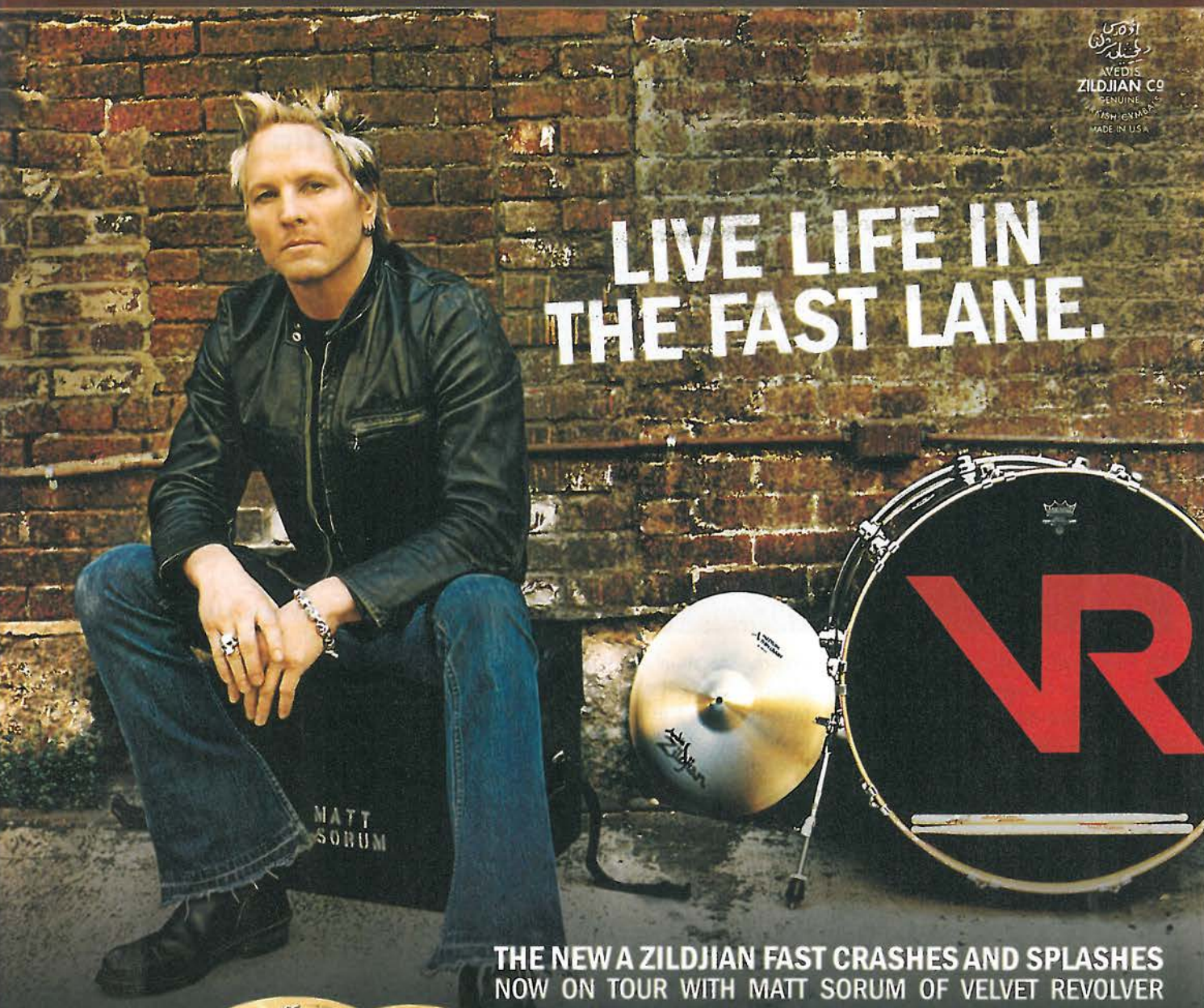


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# Chicago's Tris Imboden On Overcoming Anxiety

**Q** First of all, thank you for your *Latin Rock For Gringos* video. It contains some amazing drum fills, along with some great technique information that I really appreciate.

When guys like me listen to pros like you play, we naturally dream of being on that level ourselves. I have a fairly big show gig coming up, and to tell you the truth I'm a little nervous. How do you deal with this (if it ever happens to you), and how can it be overcome? **Sam Goforth**

**A** Thank you for all your kind words. I'm very happy that you found my video interesting.

I, too, have to deal with being nervous on occasion, even after playing with Chicago and other major acts for so many years. One thing that I've found helpful is to remember to *breathe*. As simple as that sounds, I've always had a tendency to forget to breathe when I'm nervous. I also tend to hold my breath when I'm playing a particularly difficult lick or musical passage. When I remember to breathe, I naturally execute everything in a more relaxed manner.

Another thing that has helped me is to consciously relax my grip, which otherwise tends to tense up when I'm anxious about a gig. When I remember to do this, not only do I play better, but the drums also sound better.

Remember, with adequate rehearsal and preparation your "inner computer" will know how to play everything perfectly. The thing that's tough is learning how to get out of the way and let it happen. I hope this helps. All the best to you, and thanks for listening.

## Repeat Bar

### A Classic Quote From MD's Past

"You have to play with dynamics in order to make it sound good. That's the beauty of what John Bonham would do. He wasn't destroying his drums all the time, but he had his moments. And when he did, they would jump out at you. It's all about picking those moments."
Foo Fighters' **Dave Grohl**, July 2004

**Want to ask your favorite drummer a question?**

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**Ask A Pro,**
**Modern Drummer,**
**12 Old Bridge Rd.,**
**Cedar Grove, NJ 07009**

Or email

**rvh@moderndrummer.com**

# Studio Master Rick Marotta's Cymbal Choices

**Q** I recently purchased a copy of the *Steve Gadd American Drummers Achievement Awards* tribute DVD, and I've watched it repeatedly. The thing that impresses me the most is the sound of your cymbals (particularly your ride) on the songs on which you play. What exact setup did you use for this gig, and what advice would you have for picking out a great-sounding ride like yours?

**Harold McKinney**

**A** To be honest, I didn't select those cymbals personally. They were provided by Zildjian for that event. However, I liked them so much that I took them home with me afterward! From my left behind the kit, the setup included 14" K Custom Special Dry hi-hats, a 17" K Custom Dark crash, an 18" K Custom Dark crash, a 22" K Custom High-Definition ride, and a 16" A Custom Fast crash.

As far as rides go, for as long as I've been playing I've leaned towards dark, thin ride cymbals. Prior to taking home the ride from the ADAA event, I'd been using Zildjian's Pre-Aged Dry light K rides for a long time. I like them a lot. I hope this answers your question.

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* Set-up consists of 1 pair of HiHats, and 4 cymbals

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# Technical Tips From Nashville Great
# Eddie Bayers

**Q** You are one of my favorite drummers of all time. Unfortunately, in all the interviews I've read about you, no technical questions have been asked. So here we go!

When you first started, did you learn all of the rudiments? What books did you study out of? How long had you been playing before you started to play open-handed? Do you have a practice routine? And finally, is the Players DVD available world-wide? (I live in Australia.)

It would be terrific if you could find the time to do a DVD showing some of your great styles, like fast train beats, slow ballads featuring your tom fills, and any other grooves. I'd also like to hear your tuning tips—especially for your snare. So how 'bout getting some of your friends together and whipping up something along the lines of Steve Jordan's *The Groove Is Here*? I love listening to all your great drumming. I would really love to see it as well.

**Keith Ostler**

**A** Thanks for all your questions. Let me answer them in order. I didn't start out by learning the rudiments. When I first started, it was the basic "sit down and start playing just to discover a groove" situation. Later, when I played keyboards in a band with the great Larrie Londin, he did take the time to show me the basic rudiments.

I didn't study drumming from any book. However, please understand that I had already been classically trained in piano, so I did have reading chops. Not in drum notation, per se, but it wasn't hard to adapt.

I'd been drumming for about eleven years before I switched to the open-handed style. I began playing open handed after my motorcycle accident in 1985. I had more than a year to learn in, because my wrist would not heal after the surgery/pinning and I couldn't do any real performing on drums.

I don't have a practice routine since my accident. There really isn't anything I can do about the restrictions involved in what my left hand is capable of. It's pinned in such a way that I can hold the stick and use minimal wrist action, but not my fingers. I do practice particular feels or grooves that I hear from other efforts that I like. I'll work on those till I feel comfortable with them.

The Players DVD is available world-wide. You can go to amazon.com or Tower Records online. The official title is *The Players Live In Nashville*. As far as my doing a video goes, I have thought about it, and I've had several offers. I think it's just a matter of time.

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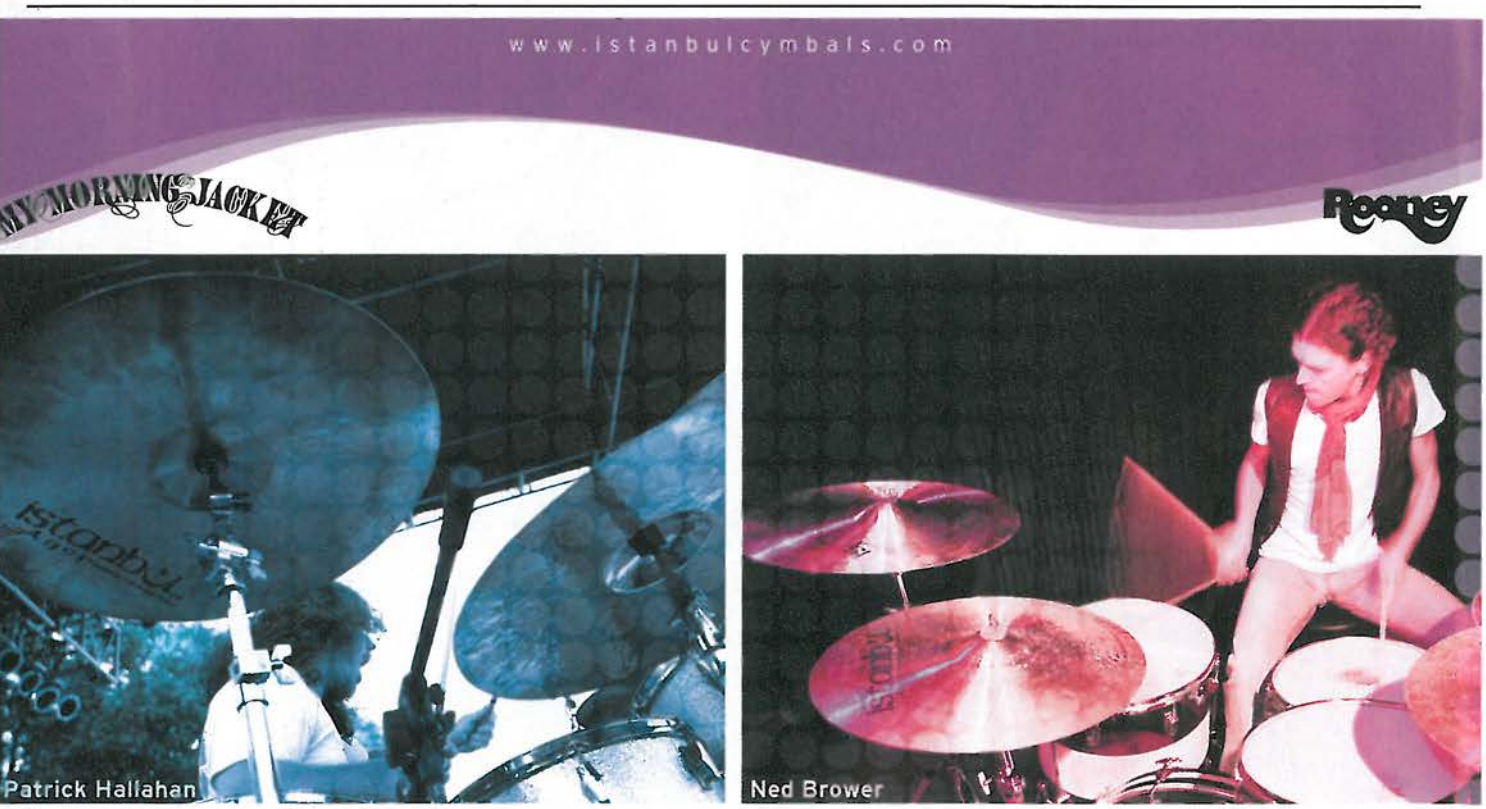
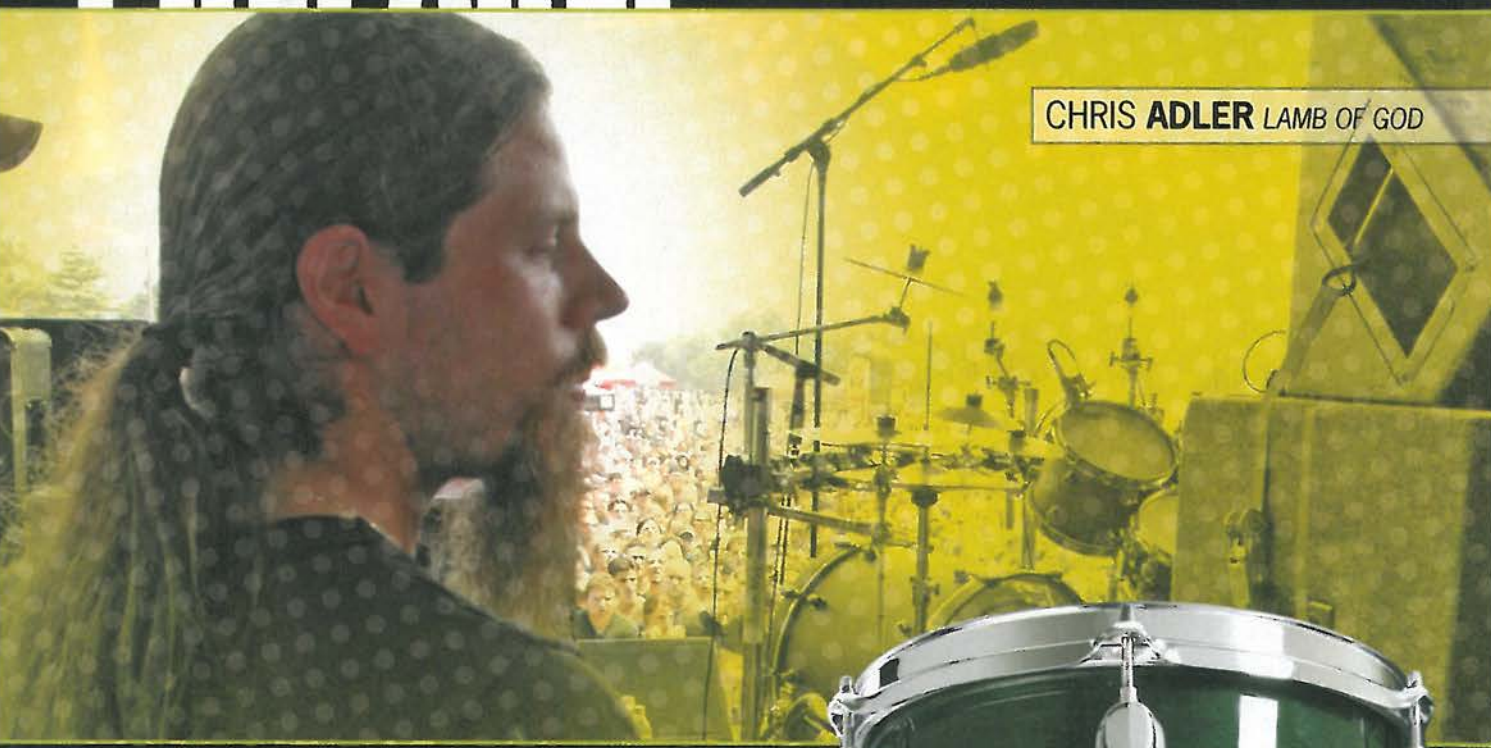


MAPEX

# PREPARE.

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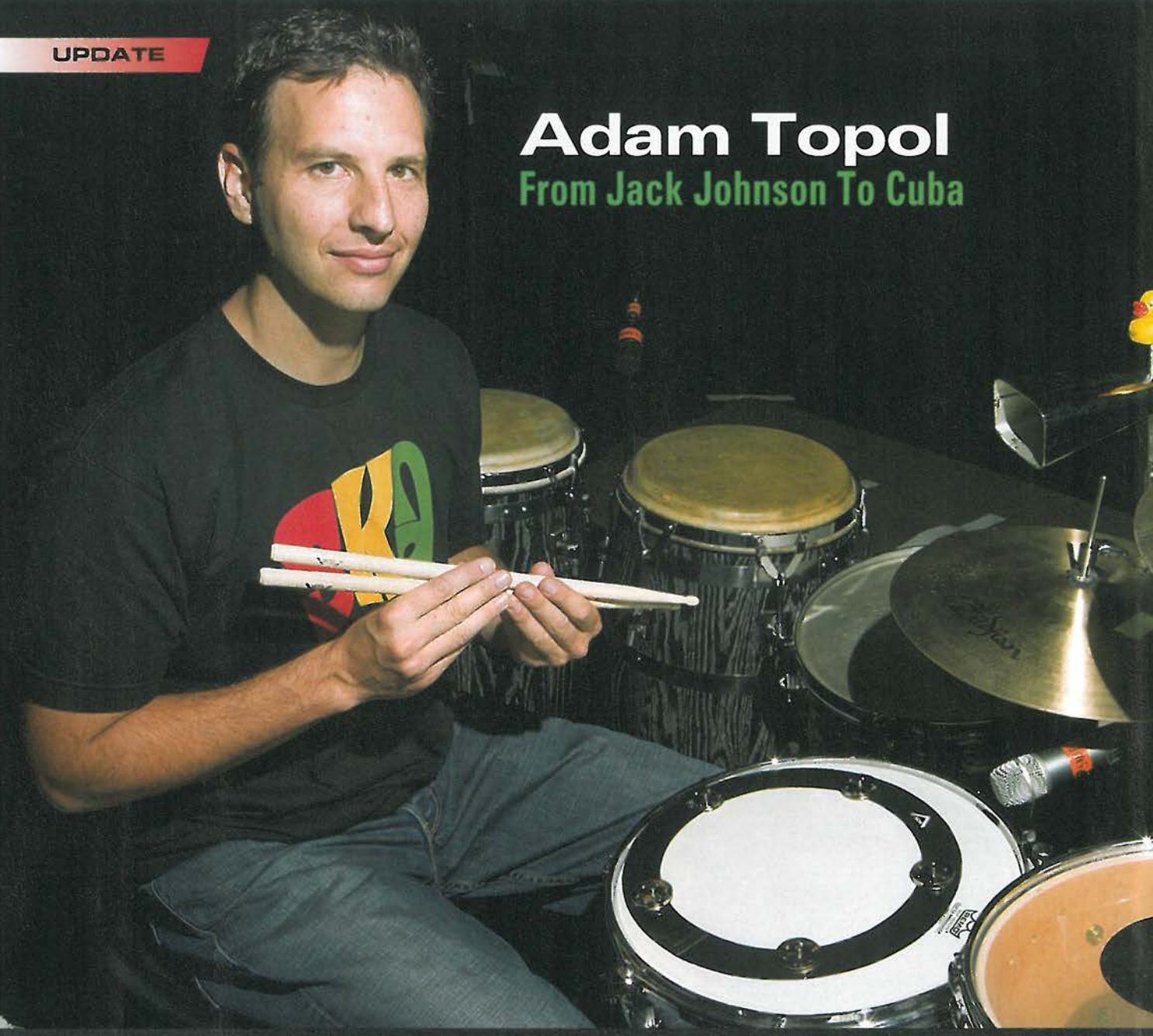
# Adam Topol

## From Jack Johnson To Cuba



Adam Topol doesn't see platinum success with Jack Johnson as any reason to relax. Actually, he's leaving no stone unturned in search of musical tidbits he can add to his arsenal. "All the bands we've toured with have sick drummers," he says. "All those people blow me away. So sometimes, I'll run back and practice a lick that Jeffrey Clemens [G. Love drummer] taught me."

Topol has found no shortage of resources for learning and expanding his repertoire off the road either. "When I got to Cuba, I hit everybody up for lessons," says Adam, who has studied in Cuba on five different occasions. "Everybody has stuff to teach you there. I could just listen to a man talk about rumba."

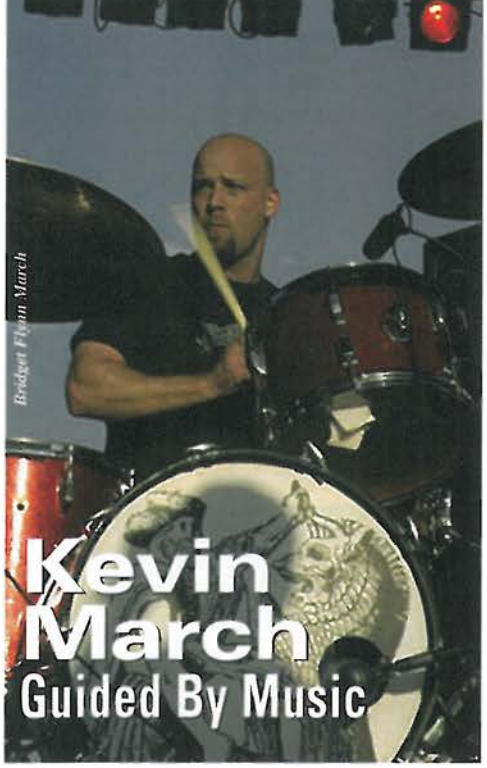
His love of music from Cuba, Africa, and the West Indies led to Ritmo Y Canto, a project (and album) in which Topol is joined by what he calls "some of the best people in that art form." The self-titled album features a collection of Afro-Cuban rhythms and vocals.

Studying the countries' native music and making the album, Topol says, has afforded him a perspective not cultivated in the States. "Here, people get really into the singer; that's the focal point. Over there, it's so based on rhythms. It really opened me up."

Though Ritmo has performed some live shows, Topol's schedule with Johnson isn't conducive to putting in the time he'd like with the rumba players. Not that he's complaining. "Fortunately, I've been really busy with Jack," he says. "For the last four or five years, I've gone all around the world."

Topol was introduced to Johnson by producer J.P. Punier in Los Angeles. The meeting led to Adam landing the gig with Johnson and the recording of *Brushfire Fairytales*, the album that put Johnson and company in dorm rooms on every college campus in America. And the band that was first exposed to mainstream audiences opening for Ben Harper now co-headlines shows with the college-rock mainstay.

"I couldn't ask to work for a cooler singer/songwriter," Topol says of Johnson. "I've kinda come along for this really nice ride." **Chris Kornelis**




# Kevin March
## Guided By Music

"On my ride home from the last show, that's when I really started thinking, 'What am I going to do next?'" Kevin March is reflecting on the recent retirement of Guided By Voices, the immensely prolific, critically heralded indie rock band for which he drummed between January 2002 and the group's final show on New Year's Eve, 2004.

Though sad to receive word last April of frontman Robert Pollard's plan to put the band he led for eighteen years to bed, March, whose pre-GBV résumé includes stints with Shudder To Think and The Dambuilders, did his best to enjoy the group's final months of touring. "I went into the mode of, 'Let's really enjoy this because it won't be around anymore,'" he says. "I didn't want to be anxious about what I was going to do next—though I think any musician's tendency *is* to get anxious when you know your job is coming to an end."

A planned period of downtime quickly evaporated early this spring as March hit the road with former Grifter Dave Shouse's Bloodthirsty Lovers, the laptop-driven, psychedelic pop band on whose 2004 album, *The Delicate Seam*, March drummed. "The Bloodthirsty Lovers is definitely a different kind of style," says March. "Dave likes to get a little wild with the music, and I like the openness of that."

March also recently reconnected with his former Shudder To Think bandmate Craig Wedren, drumming on and co-producing songs for a Wedren solo album, which will see release this summer on Bright Eyes wunderkind Conor Oberst's Team Love label.

"I wanted to work with people I'd done stuff with before and whose work I respected," says March of his recent musical endeavors. "As long as the music is heartfelt, that's what I enjoy." **Jon Wurster**

# Avishai Cohen's Mark Guiliana
## Thrilling You Softly

He may well be at the forefront of an exciting new style of drumming. Twenty-four-year-old New Jersey native Mark Guiliana reveals this on Avishai Cohen's new album, *At Home*. To be sure, file it under jazz—there's too many implied triplets to do otherwise. But there's also a willingness to cross boundaries into other styles, such as drum 'n' bass. On this album, you'll hear more slick fills and chattering cross-stick than you've heard in a long time. But the trick is that when Guiliana scurries rabbit-like across the skins, the meter doesn't budge.

"Being open to anything is really important to me," explains Mark. "I try not to exaggerate *how* open. I really get excited about trying to find that 'loud energy' through softer playing and relying on communication and exploration of sounds. At lower dynamics, I can get more sounds out of the drums."

Perhaps surprisingly, powerhouse Tony Williams was a major inspiration. So was Mark's first teacher, Joe Bergamini. "Then when I attended William Paterson University," Mark recalls, "I got into Jim Black. He embraces the idea of 'anything goes.' I studied with John Riley for a few years, too. He was a real role model because he can do it all."

Asked about his penchant for cross-stick work, Mark replies, "I like playing cross-stick because it's an articulate sound, a short sound, but not a loud sound. With the left stick in that position, the right hand is free to play the rims, head, or even the other stick."

Apart from his steady gig with Avishai, Guiliana subs in The Jazz Mandolin Project. And he's keen to work more around New York with his own band, Heernt. "*Heernt*?" Mark smiles: "It's just a sound I like." Check out www.markguiliana.com for more on the up-and-comer. **T. Bruce Wittet**

## High On Fire's

# Des Kensel

## Stripped Down And Raw

S. Kincade

High On Fire drummer Des Kensel remembers the moment he and his bandmates first hooked up with radical engineer Steve Albini. "He asked us if there were any weird ideas or experimental things we wanted to work with. We told him, 'Not really. We just want it to be raw and have it sound like us.'"

You certainly can't blame them. On the Bay Area trio's third album, *Blessed Black Wings* (Relapse), mammoth riffs and gargantuan grooves reign supreme, while Kensel wages a furiously heavy and constantly catchy assault with his Pearl maple kit. "I used to play a five-piece with a double kick pedal," the drummer says, "but now I play a four-piece with a single pedal. My style has progressed."

S. Kincade

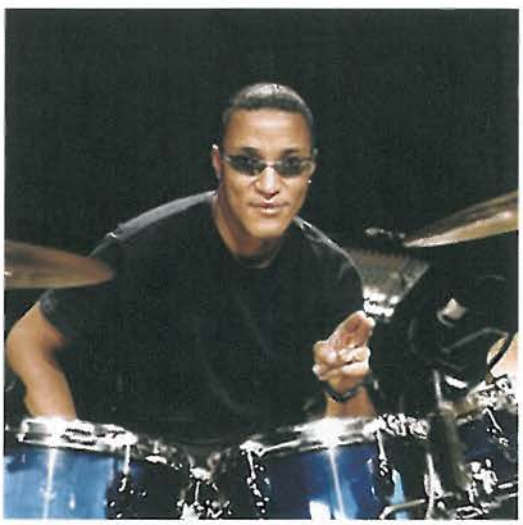
For one thing, Kensel's drumming reveals heaps of tom work, giving his attack a dark, tribal feel. And his "mock" double bass is something you'll notice on nearly every song. "I use the floor tom as if it were a second kick," he says. As for cymbals, Kensel relied solely on Zildjian rides as crashes ("rides last longer") when the band performed on the Sounds Of The Underground tour recently.

During the trio's latest studio sessions, Albini didn't mess too much with Kensel's approach. But he did capture what's best about it—with carefully chosen and placed microphones. The band would play live in the studio, and after Albini determined what frequencies needed to stand out, he picked mic's accordingly. "He's a scientist in that way," Kensel notes. Albini, however, did inspire Kensel to get somewhat experimental on the album's final track, "Sons Of Thunder." According to Kensel, "Those huge fills were inspired by a big hippie drum circle." **Jeff Perlah**

# Sean "The Rick" Rickman

## The Natural

In viewing the *Compositional Drumming* DVD by Washington, DC born Sean Rickman, one is immediately taken aback by his advanced drumming skills. No question, he is in a league with fusion greats Dennis Chambers, Steve Smith, and Dave Weckl. Rickman, also a talented multi-instrumentalist, composed the complex music and played all instruments on the DVD.



Rickman credits his family for his talents. "My uncle had a set of drums in his basement that I started playing when I was about four years old," Sean recalls. "My other uncle was a DJ and had lots of records. So when other kids my age were outside playing, I would be in the basement playing drums along to all my uncle's records—for hours and hours. I did that for several years."

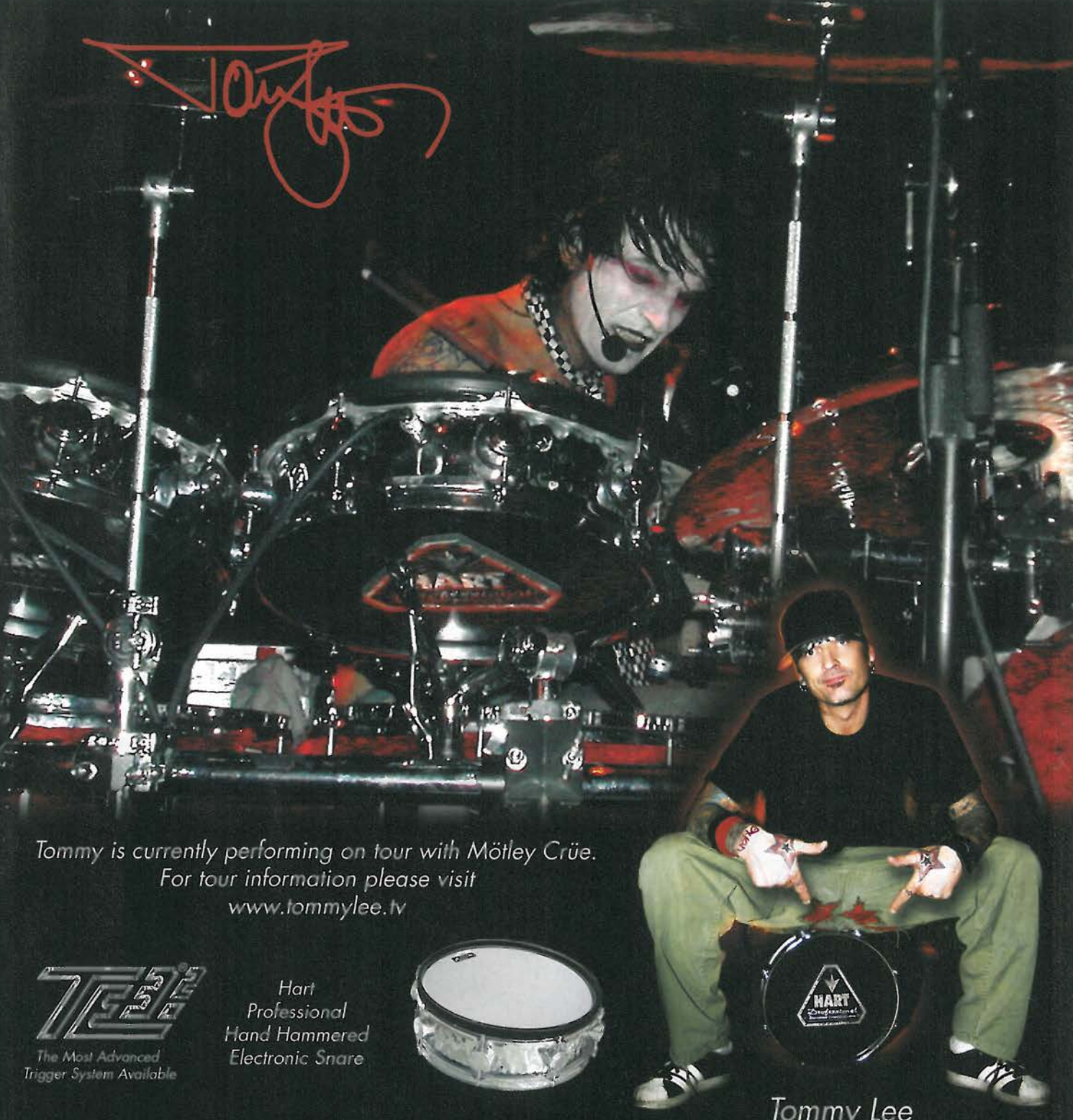
Sean began performing with the DC reggae band Blacksheep, then relocated to Memphis, Tennessee in 1992 to work with the late guitar master Shawn Lane. The drummer would go on to work on several recordings and instructional video performances with Lane.

In 1993, Sean moved to Los Angeles to perform with his father, veteran guitarist Phil Upchurch, with whom he toured Europe. "My mother and father separated before I was born," notes Rickman. "My mother was a professional singer and taught me everything about music. I didn't meet my father until about 1981, when I was already playing guitar, bass, and drums.

"My dad did turn me onto some great drummers," Sean continues. "He said, 'You've got to check out Philly Joe Jones on Miles Davis's *Milestones*.' He also said I needed to learn how to play a shuffle like Art Blakey, because he played the best shuffle beats."

While doing sessions in New York for singer Angela Bofill, Rickman met up with drummer Gene Lake, who has recommended him for several gigs, including Meshell Ndegeocello, alto-saxophonist Steve Coleman, Dapp Theory, and recently a tour with Screaming Headless Torsos.

Rickman's philosophy for playing is to understand the form of the music first and then decide what technique best fits the music. "When I was younger I would play the whole form of all my favorite songs without the music," Sean says. "I played all the drum tracks on my DVD with just a click and recorded the other tracks later. I feel that you should learn the form first, then the rhythm, and then decide which techniques will bring the song to life." **Mike Haid**



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# NEWS

**Ian Wallace** recently relocated to LA and has been doing studio sessions with some of LA's finest producers, including Pat Leonard and Trivers/Myers. He's also been recording for corporate America. Most recently, Ian has formed a group called The Crimson Jazz Trio. Ian produced the band's first CD, *The King Crimson Songbook, Volume One*. For more info go to www.ianrwallace.com or www.crimsonjazztrio.com.

**Scott Hessel** is on The Militia Group's self-titled debut.

**Sam McCandless** is on the new Cold album, *A Different Kind Of Pain*.

**Luke Pickerill** is on The Prom Kings' self-titled debut.

**Mike "Soupy" Sessa** has been working with Eugene Edwards.

**Ralph Penland** is on Eric Lewis's *Hopscotch*.

**Dave Cottini** is on the recent EP by The Ike Reilly Assassination, *Sparkle In The Finish*.

**Aaron "Monty" Montgomery** is on Trapt's *Someone In Control*.

**Mike Shapiro** is on Kevyn Lettau's *Bye Bye Blackbird*.

**Chad Sexton** is on the latest 311 release, *Don't Tread On Me*.

**Steve Bowman** is on Tremolo's debut full-length album, *Love Is The Greatest Revenge*.

**Mike Arturi** is currently on the road with The Lovin' Spoonful and Gary Lewis & The Playboys.

**Sam Ulano** and pianist Steve Elmer are on the newly released CD *Sam And Steve/Steve And Sam, Brothers In Swing*. For more info go to www.samulano.com.

**Eric Powers** is touring with Dave Mason.

Usher's **Aaron Spears** spent the summer on the *American Idol* live tour.

**Brian Fraser-Moore** is touring with Babyface. Brian has also been cutting tracks for Christina Aguilera's forthcoming CD.

Son of famed keyboardist/composer Jan Hammer, **Paul Hammer**, plays drums, piano, and guitar on his debut CD, *19*.

**Brendan Hill** is on the recent Blues Traveler CD, *Bastardos!*

**Joe Franco** is on recent albums by Magellan, Steve Walsh, and Twisted Sister's Eddie Ojeda. He will also be touring with Van Helsing's Curse in October.

**Kenny Aronoff** is on the new Iommi disc, *Fused*. It features Tony Iommi and Glenn Hughes.

Congratulations to Yamaha's **Joe Testa** and his wife, Kim, on the birth of their daughter, Scarlett Robin.

# DRUM DATES

This month's important events in drumming history

Booker T's **Al Jackson Jr.** was born on 11/27/34, **Yogi Horton** on 11/25/59. **Eric Carr** passed away on 11/24/91. **Tony Thompson** was born on 11/15/54, and passed away on 11/12/03. **R.J. Vealey**, who joined The Atlanta Rhythm Section in 1995, passed away on 11/13/99.

On 11/3/57, saxophonist Sonny Rollins records *A Night At The Village Vanguard* with **Elvin Jones** on drums.

On 11/15/71, Thelonious Monk makes his last studio recording with bassist Al McKibbon and **Art Blakey**.

On 11/17/73, **Ringo Starr** has the number-2 album with his third solo recording, *Ringo*. A week later, on 11/24/73, he tops the singles charts with the hit "Photograph."

In November of '84, Madonna (with the late **Tony Thompson** on drums) has her first number-1 single with "Like A Virgin."

## Happy Birthday!

**Idris Muhammad** (jazz and R&B master): 11/13/39

**Roy Burns** (big band great): 11/30/35

**Billy Hart** (jazz giant): 11/29/40

**Pete Best** (early Beatles/solo): 11/21/41

**Floyd Sneed** (Three Dog Night): 11/22/43

**Les Demerle** (Transfusion): 11/4/46

**David Garibaldi** (Tower Of Power): 11/4/46

**Bev Bevan** (ELO): 11/25/46

**Alphonse Mouzon** (fusion great): 11/21/48

**Wally "Gator" Watson** (Lionel Hampton): 11/9/51

**Clem Burke** (Blondie): 11/24/55

**Adam Nussbaum** (jazz journeyman): 11/29/55

**Matt Sorum** (Velvet Revolver): 11/19/60

**Pat Petrillo** (Gloria Gaynor): 11/2/61

**Charlie Benante** (Anthrax): 11/27/62

**Mike Bordin** (Ozzy Osbourne): 11/27/62

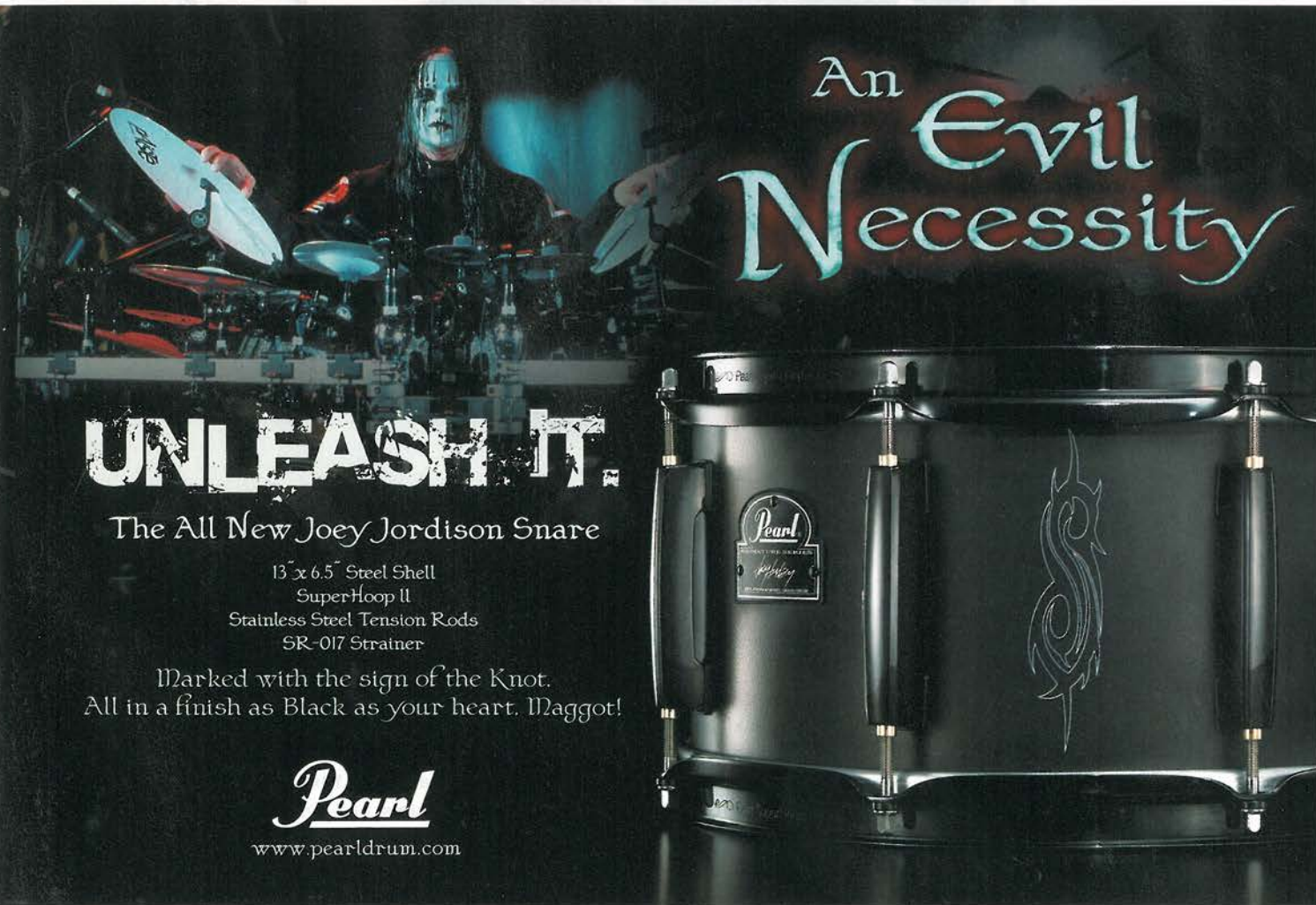
**Matt Cameron** (Pearl Jam): 11/28/62

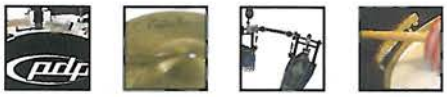
**Rick Allen** (Def Leppard): 11/1/63

**Russ Miller** (sessions): 11/16/69

**Travis Barker** (Blink-182): 11/14/75

MD Radio **To hear some of the artists mentioned in this month's *Update*, go to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com.**



# Pacific Drums & Percussion LXE Kit

## At The Top Of The Middle

*by Chap Ostrander*

**KEY NOTES**

- striking finish over an exotic veneer
- pro-level hardware
- hi-hat pedal travel might not suit all players

This five-piece configuration is standard in the LXE series.

Pacific Drums & Percussion is the division of Drum Workshop that specializes in kits ranging from entry-level to what would be considered mid-price within a full-range line. The LX lacquer-finished series has always been at the top of the Pacific range. But now the company has raised the level one notch by adding a veneer of Kurillian Birch to the LX maple shell, and then applying a Charcoal-To-Natural Lacquer Fade finish. The result is the LX Exotic series, or LXE.

### Construction Details

The LXE kit comes in a standard five-piece setup, with a 900 series hardware package. You can also opt to add a high and/or a low tom. The kit we were sent for review started with the standard configuration of 18x22 bass drum (an 18x20 is optional), 8x10, 9x12, and 11x14 suspended toms, and a matching 5x14 snare. Pacific

**The LXE is shipped with Pacific's 900 series hardware package, including the SS900 snare stand, HH900 hi-hat, CS900 cymbal stand, CB900 boom stand, and SP500 bass drum pedal (not shown).**

also sent us the optional 7x8 rack tom and 14x16 floor tom with legs. (The 11x14 tom on the standard kit is "flown" off a cymbal stand.)

The three rack toms have six lugs per head. The two floor toms, as well as the bass and snare drum, all have eight lugs. The 8-ply maple shells have no reinforcing hoops. The Kurillian Birch is applied as part of the veneer process, thus becoming a bonded part of the shell. A close examination of the shells on our review kit revealed them to be virtually flawless—sanded smooth inside, with beautifully cut bearing edges.

The LXE kit comes with the professional features of the LX series, such as True-Pitch tension rods, F.A.S.T. tom sizes, STM tom mounts, and Pro-Cut bearing edges. The lugs are the PDP ovals with two points of attachment to the shell. I've always thought that this type of lug design reduces torque to the shell. The bass drum hoops are finished with the same lacquer as are the shells, and they're shaded to complement the effect of the Charcoal Fade finish. The insides of the hoops are finished with natural oil.

### Sound

A thin shell produces a deeper pitch than a thicker one does (all other factors being equal). This was certainly the case with the LXE kit. The toms all came with PDP clear-coated medium heads on top with clear heads underneath. Due to PDP's shell-matching process, the drums tuned up with intervals that kept each one distinct, yet still let them sound like a family of voices.

I noticed that the steel hoops fitted onto all the LXE drums didn't feel very heavy. When I asked PDP about it, they told me that the hoop thickness is 1.6 mm, and that the size was chosen based on how that specific thickness resonates with the drum. I have to say that this choice seems to have been a good one. The tones of all the drums were very clean and satisfying, and even the highest tom possessed a respectable amount of depth. The low undertones gave the drums great presence.

The bass drum also had a PDP clear-coated medium batter, with a black front head. Pacific supplies a pillow that's held between the heads with hook-and-loop fastening strips, and that can be positioned (or removed) to suit individual preferences. I generally don't like placing things inside the drum or against the heads, but in this case the pillow did a good job of cutting down on extra ring, while still allowing a nice low thump to come out.

The 5x14 snare was surprisingly crisp and clean. It had a medium single-ply coated head on top, with a clear thin snare-side head below. The strainer was smooth and quiet, and it allowed a full range of adjustments.

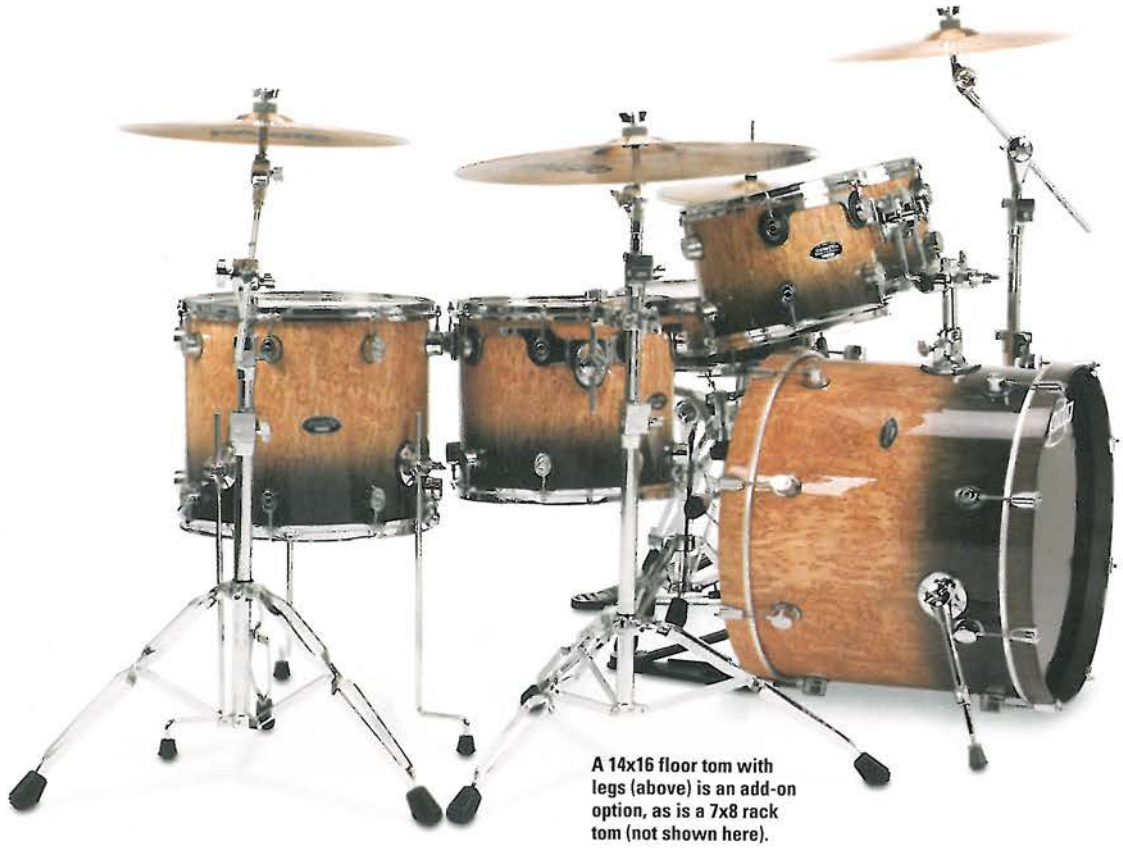
### Hardware

I was very impressed by the overall quality of the Pacific hardware. It's all double-braced, with heavy-weight tubing, oversized rubber feet, and matching memory locks to retain height settings. The snare and cymbal tilters all feature fine teeth, providing plenty of positioning angles. The wing screws are all contoured, which made them easier to handle during set-up and tear-down. One feature that struck me immediately was the fact that the Pacific stands were easy to open and set up right out of the box. With some new stands it can be a real struggle just to get the legs down the first few times.

The 900 series hardware package includes a bass drum pedal, a hi-hat stand, a snare stand, a straight cymbal stand, and a convertible boom. Two clamp-on accessory tom mounts were supplied with our review kit. One of them comes with the standard five-piece configuration (for the 11x14 tom). The other was sent to mount the 8" add-on tom. The brackets used with the STM tom holders double as leg holders for floor toms. The hinged design on these brackets made it easy to mount the drums or install the tom legs, and provided a very positive feel when I tightened them in place. The suspended toms came supplied with memory locks; similar locks are available for the floor tom legs.

The SP500 single pedal utilizes a single chain and a two-way beater. It has all the basic adjustments for spring tension, beater angle, and footboard height. It has a solid base underneath, and you need a drumkey to tighten it onto the bass hoop. It's quiet and responsive, without a lot of frills.

The SS900 snare stand has all the features you'd expect—plus one extra. By loosening a drumkey screw at the bottom of the leg assembly, the whole package can slide down into a lower position than most stands will go. This will appeal to players who position their snare drums extra low, because they won't have to buy another snare stand to do that job.



A 14x16 floor tom with legs (above) is an add-on option, as is a 7x8 rack tom (not shown here).

The straight and convertible boom cymbal stands are both in the heavyweight division, with double bracing and thick tubing. This is a good thing if you're going to be flying toms off of them, and you don't want to worry about the whole thing tipping over on the first good shot. The fine teeth in the tilters gives you the ability to place the cymbals right where you want them, and the design of the memory locks matches the stands.

The die-cast bass drum claw hooks have felt strips inside to protect the hoop finish. The bass drum legs are no-nonsense models that either fold against the shell or angle forward. I could adjust the length, and I could choose whether I wanted a rubber foot or a spike. I prefer this design to the type of leg with lots of available angles—I've never thought I needed all that. Here you have two choices: Play it or pack it.

The HH900 hi-hat stand has many positive features, including the large rubber feet, heavy tubing, and matching memory lock of the other stands. The clutch is the type where the rod passes through a tightening eyebolt, which provides a very solid hold on the top cymbal. The assembly holding the three legs can be rotated to accommodate other pedals. Spring tension is adjusted by means of a large plastic ring that can be turned and moved up or down. All in all, it's a fine design.

Still, one aspect of the hi-hat puzzled me. When I sat down to play it, the pedal depressed about a third of the distance toward the floor...and stopped. This seemed unusual to me. When I set up my own hi-hat, I press my foot almost to the floor, let it up slightly, and then tighten the clutch. My foot ends up being almost flat on the floor when the hi-hat cymbals are closed. When I checked one of my stands, it offered slightly more than 3" of travel distance before the pedal bottomed out. I'd estimate the PDP hi-hat's travel at about $1\frac{1}{2}$".

Once again I contacted Pacific, to ask about this situation. I was informed that their design team had determined that a pedal-travel distance of $1\frac{1}{2}$" was more than enough.

I have to disagree on this one. While $1\frac{1}{2}$" may be more than enough for some—perhaps even most—players, I'm skeptical that it would work for everyone. Why limit the pedal's appeal? Wouldn't it be wiser to build more travel "headroom" into the pedal and have some players *not* use all of it, rather than to force others to try to play within a restricted distance?

### Conclusion

The LXE drums are beautiful. The stunning Charcoal-To-Natural Lacquer Fade finish adds greater depth to the look of the drums. I would have been impressed with the natural lacquered birch by itself. Adding the fade finish over that creates the look of a custom-made kit. The same goes for the overall construction quality of the drums.

The weight and quality of the hardware package completes the picture of a serious professional-level kit. At just under $3,000, the LXE isn't cheap, but it certainly falls into the "high mid-price" range at which its targeted. It's a classic case of getting what you pay for...and then some.

### THE NUMBERS

**LXE five-piece kit,** with 22" bass drum and 900 series hardware package ..... **$2,998**

**LXE five-piece kit,** with 20" bass drum and 900 series hardware package ..... **$2,948**

**7x8 add-on rack tom** ..... **$345**

**14x16 add-on floor tom** with legs ..... **$499**

Standard five-piece kits include bass drums as indicated above, 8x10, 9x12, and 11x14 suspended toms, and a matching 5x14 snare. 900 series hardware package includes an SP500 single pedal, an HH900 hi-hat stand, a CB900 boom cymbal stand, a CS900 straight cymbal stand, an SS900 snare stand, and an AC991 tom clamp.

**(805) 485-6999, www.pacificdrums.com.**

# Paiste PST3 And PST5 Cymbals, Rude Thin Crashes, And Signature Dark Energy Splashes

## Price...Power...And Pizzazz

**by Robin Tolleson**

### KEY NOTES

- Rude thin crashes display surprising dynamic range
- PST3 18" crash/rides have distinct and professional sound
- PST5 series features some very nice specific models
- PST5 medium crash cymbals are too thick to open up easily
- China cymbals are abrasive and out of tune with themselves

Paiste has been busy. Earlier this year they scrapped their entire existing "affordable" cymbal program and introduced completely new lines to fill the void. They also introduced a series of cymbals with the seemingly contradictory designation of Rude *thin* crashes. And they augmented their Signature line with a couple of tasty new splashes. Let's see how their efforts have panned out.

### PST3 And PST5 Cymbals

When a major cymbal manufacturer introduces a line of "affordable" cymbals, the results are sometimes less than tasty. But Paiste's new PST3 and PST5 cymbals offer beginning and semi-pro drummers some interesting choices. And they also give pros some attractive alternative cymbals to think about that won't break the bank.

PST stands for Paiste Sound Technology, meaning that Paiste has applied the techniques and methodology developed for their Swiss-made high-end cymbals toward the manufacture of these less-pricey models. And it seems as though the company did put some real thought into these cymbals. When you can get a nice-sounding set of hats, a crash, a ride, and a decent splash for $300, that's pretty good.

In general, the PST5s (made, Paiste says, with their high-grade 2002 bronze in a new production method) have a deeper pitch than the PST3s, which are made using "an especially sonorous copper-based brass alloy." This difference in alloy composition sometimes translates to a classier, more "high-end" sound in the PST5s. But that doesn't mean that some of the PTS3 models might not sound "better" to some drummers who prefer a lighter, faster, or trashier sound.

### PST5s

Some of the PST5s are a bit clangy. Of their three types of crash cymbals (thin, medium, and Rock), I prefer the thin models. The 16" medium crashes are hard to open up, and they have a low-end sound, while the 18" medium crash has a lot of spread and a resulting lack of definition. The Rock crashes are even heavier, making the 16" size a little less attractive-sounding. On the other hand, the larger Rock crashes (18" and 19") pack a satisfying wallop when bashed.

The 16" and 18" PST5 China cymbals are weapons that should be used only if absolutely necessary. It was real work finding a spot to hit those things that didn't make my ears hurt. Thickness in a China cymbal is a bad thing, I think.

On a more positive note, there are some real surprises among the PST5s. For example, the 18" crash/ride is quite sweet, with a brilliance that imitates the sizzle sound of rivets. The PST5 rides come in medium, Rock, and Groove models. The 22" Rock ride is big and heavy. It has a sweet, definitive ping, and its overtones have been squelched. The 21" Groove ride is thinner, allowing for more dynamics, which can be a good and bad thing. Build-up could be a problem for this cymbal, but it could also allow for some very heavy, intense playing. The 20" Rock ride, like its 22" sibling, is heavy and very defined, with a big bell. The 20" medium ride is similar to the Groove ride, with a lot more personality, and yes, more overtones too.

The PST5 10" splash has a surprising crispness, and a sufficient but not overwhelming amount of mid-range body. The PST5 8" splash has a bit too much bell and very little body. It's getting harder and harder for me to find an 8" splash—in *any* price range—that satisfies my ear. Most sound very novelty-esque. So for the price, I can't really be critical of the effort Paiste has put into their affordable splashes.

### A Hi-Hat Combo

The PST5 13" hi-hats are nice, but a bit too bright for me. The PST3 hats are perfectly acceptable beginning cymbals, but a bit on the dry side, perhaps. However, when I substituted a PST3 13" bottom hi-hat cymbal for the PST5 bottom, I arrived at a happy medium that I would take out to many gigs: bright enough, but with some restraint. Since you can buy the hi-hat cymbals individually, that is an option that drummers might want to consider.

### PST3s

The PST3 13" hi-hats are nice on the ears. I like subtlety in hi-hats, and the 13s are just that. The PST3 14" hats are nice too, with a bit more brilliance and depth.

The PST3 10" splash is thinner than the PST5 version. It has a drier, trashier sound that's kind of cool.

The PST3 14" crash has a cleaner, more direct voice than does the 16" medium crash, which is harder to get to open up. The 18" China will not make you any friends. Almost as soon as you hit it, you're waiting for the thing to die out. In fairness, I just don't think budget alloys and China cymbals are made for each other.

The PST3 20" ride is a fine beginner cymbal. But the sleeper among the PST3s might be the 18" crash/ride. It's very clean and focused, and it's dry enough that you can play it hard and get a lot of attitude out of it.

### Rude Thin Crashes

Paiste's initial promotional material for these cymbals admitted that their name sounded like a contradiction in terms. After all, the Rude series was created specifically to meet the needs of hard-hitting drummers playing very loud music. The cymbals needed to be heavy in order to withstand the abuse. So *thin* Rudes? What's up with that? Paiste sent five crashes ranging from 16" to 20" so that we could find out.

No doubt about it, these are much more expressive, nuanced cymbals than the Rudes I remember. The original models were pretty one-dimensional—great for a loud rock crash, but not much else. But even the larger thin crashes—the 19" and 20"—have a sound that can be shaped some when played in different ways.

The 18" crash has a very high pitch, and it offers a brilliant overtone when played in ride mode. The smaller crashes open up well and would fit into many musical situations. They're surprisingly subtle, yet they still pack the big punch that their name implies. The Rudes have grown up.

### New Signature Dark Energy Splashes

The final part of the package that Paiste sent for review was two of their New Signature Dark Energy Splashes. I love splashes, and these new ones have a bold and controlled wash that even the most critical splash connoisseur will appreciate.

The 8" splash opens into sort of a China-ish sound. The 10" is just brilliant—entering and exiting with great clarity. Playing these cymbals is like walking into a room full of people with a beautiful woman on your arm.

### THE NUMBERS

**PST3**

| | |
|---|---|
| 10" splash | $36 |
| 14" crash | $50 |
| 16" crash | $76 |
| 18" crash/ride or China | $88 |
| 13" hi-hat top or bottom | $44 |
| 14" hi-hat top or bottom | $50 |
| 20" ride | $108 |

Cymbals are also available in various box set combinations.

**PST5**

| | |
|---|---|
| 8" splash | $50 |
| 10" splash | $60 |
| 14" thin crash | $85 |
| 16" thin, medium, or Rock crash | $110 |
| 17" medium crash | $124 |
| 18" thin, medium, or Rock crash | $138 |
| 18" crash/ride | $138 |
| 19" Rock crash | $150 |
| 16" China | $110 |
| 18" China | $138 |
| 13" medium hat top or bottom | $75 |
| 14" medium or Rock hat top or bottom | $85 |
| 20" medium or Rock ride | $164 |
| 21" Groove ride | $178 |
| 22" Rock ride | $192 |

Cymbals are also available in various box set combinations.

**Rude Thin Crashes**

| | |
|---|---|
| 16" | $282 |
| 17" | $308 |
| 18" | $342 |
| 19" | $364 |
| 20" | $396 |

**New Signature Dark Energy Splashes**

| | |
|---|---|
| 8" | $228 |
| 10" | $260 |

(800) 472-4783, www.paiste.com.

# Off-Set Double Bass Drum Pedal

## Stomping The Middle Ground

*by Rick Van Horn*

**KEY NOTES**

- pedal design permits ergonomic drumkit configuration
- outstanding construction and adjustment features
- usable by right- or left-handed drummers
- concentric-cam action may not appeal to all players

The Off-Set double bass drum pedal may be the niftiest piece of equipment you've never heard of. That's because instead of coming from one of the major percussion manufacturers, it's made by a small company called The Point Technologies. The brainchild of drummer/designer Charles Fisher, the Off-Set pedal incorporates a twin-slave design that positions the bass drum directly in front of a double-beater assembly—and directly in front of the player.

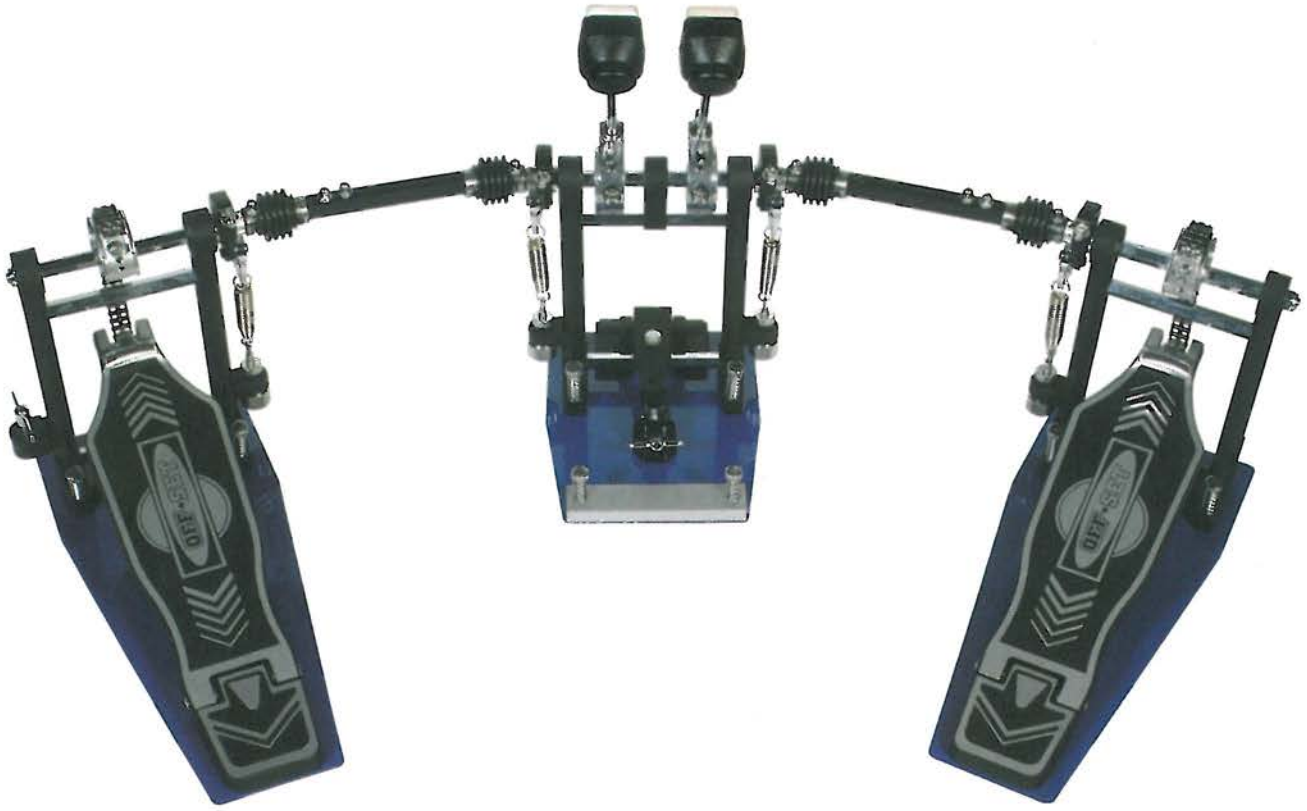
"I played double bass drums for years during the 1970s," says Charles. "I loved having my mounted toms right in front of me and my hi-hat close to my left foot instead of way off to one side. The desire to duplicate that setup using only one bass drum led me to develop the first prototype of the Off-Set pedal in 1999."

### Why This Design?

With the Off-Set pedal's twin-slave configuration, the player can face straight forward without having to turn his or her foot on the bass drum pedal or off-setting the drum itself. Bass drum sound is more even than on a standard double pedal, since each of the two beaters hits an identical (and adjustable) distance off-center on the batter head, instead of one hitting dead center and the other off to one side.

The Off-Set pedal's design allows bass drum–mounted toms to be placed directly in front of the player for easier access. Also, since the pedal is bilaterally symmetrical (the same left and right of the center beater assembly), the feel on each pedal is virtually identical. And the same pedal can be used equally well by either right- or left-footed players.

Finally, if you use a standard double pedal and you set up with your bass drum in the traditional manner (slightly to your right, facing front), your hi-hat is probably pushed over a little further to the left than you'd have it if you played a single pedal. Since the drive shafts of



the Off-Set pedal are only half the length of the shaft on a conventional double pedal, you can have your bass drum in front of you and still keep your hi-hat comfortably close to your left.

I had no problem with the spread of the two pedals to either side of the center baseplate. However, one of my colleagues at *MD* felt that the spread was a little wide, even with the two connecting rods at their shortest settings. I spoke with designer Charles Fisher about this, and he plans to make future connecting rods a little shorter. They'll still be able to extend several inches for those who might want a *wider* spread.

### Construction And Performance

The Off-Set pedal is well-made, with a contemporary design. It features reinforcing baseplates with non-skid spurs, double springs to drive each pedal, reversible hard/soft mallet heads, heavy-duty $^1/_2$" universal joints, and a double-chain drive system. The central base is fitted with four anti-skid leveling spurs that allow you to position the base flat on any floor. An easily accessible center clamp screw secures the base to the bass drum hoop.

A very nice feature is the fact that the angle of the two footboards can be adjusted independently from the angle of the two beaters. You set the footboard angle by adjusting the spring shackle lugs on the pedals and the center pedestal. As on many pedals, this also affects the axle that the beaters are affixed to. But the Off-Set pedal secures each beater shaft within a drum that can itself be rotated, independent of the beater axle. Sweet!

The Off-Set pedal performed smoothly, with as professional a feel as you could want. The 12"-long by $3^1/_2$"-wide footboards (said to be the largest in the industry) provided a good deal of leverage for heel-down playing, although they made the pedal feel a little massive when I played heel-up. The various beater- and footboard-angle adjustments allowed me to tailor the action to my liking, with two exceptions.

One exception had to do with the spring tension. The twin-spring drive system, coupled with the sheer mass of the pedal assembly, made the footboard/beater action a little stiff for my taste—even when the tension was backed off as far as possible. But to be fair, I like a *very* light-feeling pedal. A young drummer I know who specializes in speedy double-bass work actually cranked the springs up, commenting that the twin-spring drive provided the kind of quick beater return necessary for his type of playing.

More of a problem for me was the fact that the concentric cam on the Off-Set pedal provides a smooth and even beater throw/return action, while I'm used to the downstroke leverage and quick return provided by an eccentric-cam pedal. On the other hand, many drummers *prefer* pedals with concentric cams. Those drummers would probably be comfortable on the Off-Set pedal right away.

### Conclusion

The Off-Set pedal is thoughtfully designed and well made. Drummers who prefer the action of an eccentric-cam drive will likely require some time to get used to the pedal's feel. But considering its overall performance—especially the ergonomic and acoustic advantages it facilitates (in terms of bass drum positioning)—"getting used to it" might just be worth the effort.

The Off-Set pedal is sold factory direct, at a price that makes it extremely competitive compared to other double-pedal systems. Check the manufacturer's Web site or give them a call for ordering information.

**THE NUMBERS**
**Off-Set Double Pedal** . . . . . **$292**
(plus shipping & handling)
**(814) 672-5780, www.pointtremolo.com.**

# Quick Looks

## Rim Riser

The Rim Riser is a rim-click enhancer that attaches to a snare drum hoop. In essence, it's an additional section of drum rim that spans the distance between two tension rods, and raises the striking surface of the rim by $1^1/_2$". It was developed by veteran drummer and drum tech James Shepherd, who theorized that a raised rim would give players a more consistent sound, a better grip on the stick, and the ability to play more complex patterns.

Two models are available. The Permanent model is just what it sounds like: a permanent add-on that replaces two of the tension rods with longer ones. The Deluxe version attaches to the drum's existing rods by tightening down on them and using torque to hold it in place.

My initial concern with the Rim Riser was that I might have a problem getting accustomed to the new angle of the stick. It seemed as though the stick was going to be sitting considerably higher than before. Once I started to use it, however, I found that the Rim Riser gave me a better grip on the stick. This resulted in greater control over the sound. It felt the same as placing the tip of the stick on the snare and hitting the rim of one of the rack toms. I also found that I was still able to use my fingers to add ghost rhythms to different patterns, even though my hand was sitting slightly higher off the head surface.

Playing *without* the Rim Riser now feels as though my hand is hunched over the stick, and I'm more aware of lifting it for playing the rim-click pattern. Playing with the Rim Riser also makes the transition between playing rim clicks and regular snare shots much easier. I can now make the same move faster and smoother than before. Plus, the sound is, indeed, more consistent.

The Deluxe model is my favorite because it goes on and off a drum quickly and can be easily stowed in a stick bag for travel. The Permanent model is for drummers who plan to use the Rim Riser all the time and don't want to bother with attaching and detaching it frequently. A deeper drum case or bag might be required in such an instance.

Each Rim Riser is manufactured to order. Models are available to fit 6-, 8-, and 10-lug hoops in 12", 13", and 14" sizes. List price is $24.99 for either the Deluxe or Permanent add-on.

**Www.RimRiserusa.com.** ***Chap Ostrander***

# Bosphorus

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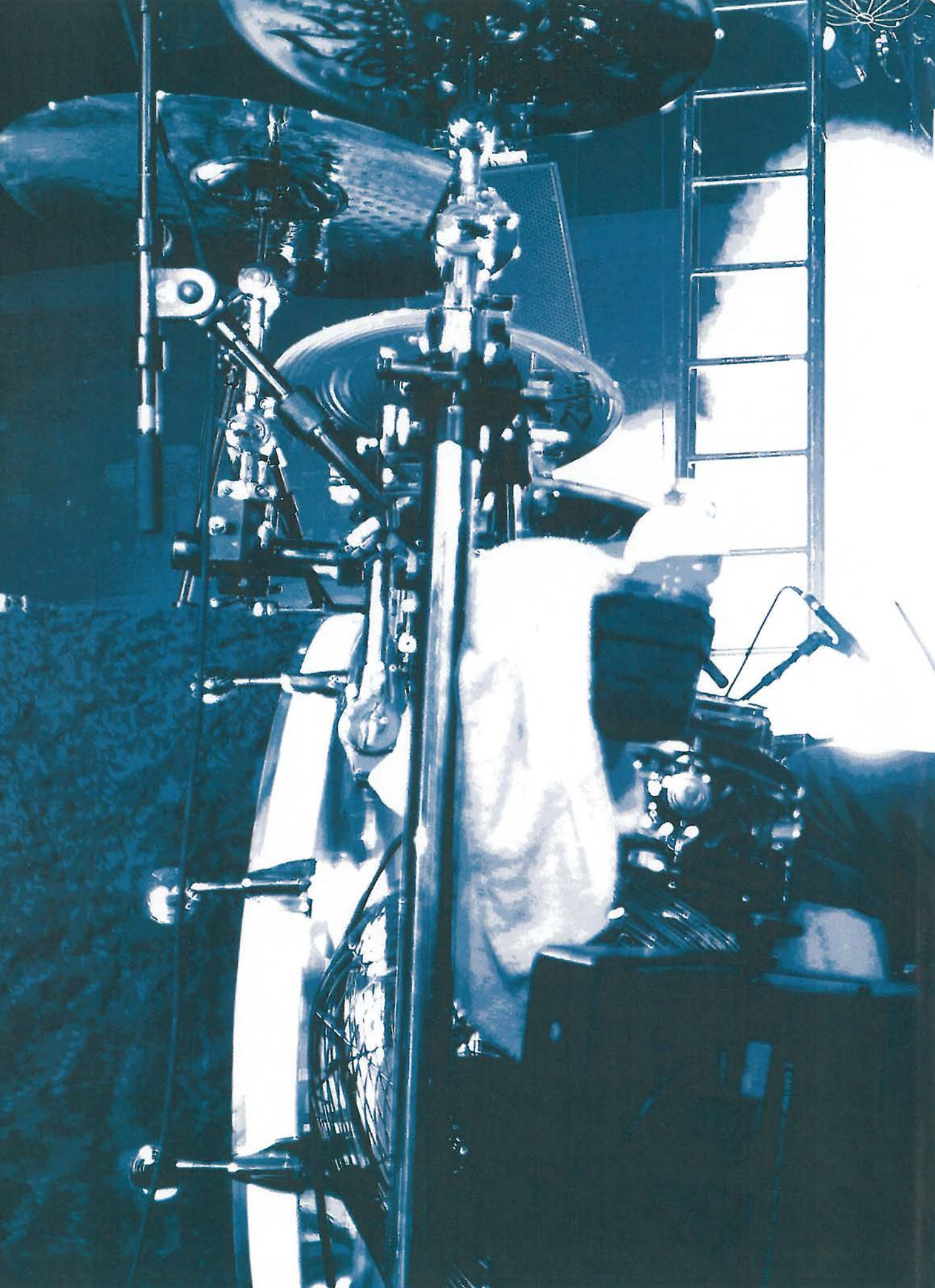

# TOMMY PLAYS DW 9000 PEDALS

dw 9000 SERIES PEDALS

www.dwdrums.com

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MD FESTIVAL WEEKEND 2005

# Elegance, Re-Birth, Inspiration...And Just Plain FUN!

***Story by Mike Haid and T. Bruce Wittet***
***Photos by Andrew Lepley***

This was the big one for the world's premier gathering of drummers. For the first time in seventeen years running, the Modern Drummer Festival Weekend uprooted from Montclair, New Jersey and ventured to Newark's impressive New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC). It was a momentous move and was hailed by many as the MD Fest's "coming of age." And come they did *en masse* on Saturday, May 28 and Sunday, May 29, Memorial Day Weekend. Crowds numbered a record 2,000 per day.

The Prudential Hall of the NJPAC had no trouble accommodating the population increase. This is no mere auditorium; it is a veritable opera house with lofty tiers of balconies. In fact, at the outset of the two-day drum summit, the polished-wood elegance prompted at least one among the T-shirted throng to speculate that he might be underdressed. (Only Zoro seemed to get it: He had the good graces to don a top hat!)

High above the stage hung a massive video screen, enabling those watching from a distance to catch every move. Remarked one ticket holder, "I sat down thinking I wasn't going to keep my eyes glued to that screen. But soon I was thankful it was there. You could see everything, right down to the ghost notes!"

If you *did* miss something, there was insurance. Hudson Music's Rob Wallis and Paul Siegel were on hand with a production team to immortalize the event on DVD. (See the ad on page 144.)

Outside, the NYPD Marching Band Drum Line greeted one and all with a warm refrain, as did Shakerleg, a superb New York street drummer of a different sort. The sun collaborated, poking out of the clouds for the first time in two weeks.

A signal came and people filed into the hall. They mingled freely, many of them eyeing the four attractive drumsets on display: Would these be part of the giveaways? (The answer later.)

A peaceful vibe, evidence of the camaraderie of drummers, pervaded the great hall. Significantly, within a couple of hours, the uniformed ushers (who had no doubt braced for some beggars' banquet) began to relax their guard.

## Behind The Scenes

As the soft seats filled up, backstage a who's who of the drum industry congregated in the main-level green room, upstairs dressing rooms, and hallways. Over the weekend, many famous drummers stopped by in the lounge and chatted: Freddie Gruber, Carmine Appice, Max Weinberg, Ari Hoenig, Anton Fig, Aaron Spears, Earl Young, Bobby Sanabria, Bobby Rondinelli, and Billy Ward (accepting the award for Best Educational DVD), to name a few.

Wiz drum designer and musician Bob Gatzen, who would later receive an Editors Achievement Award for his impressive contributions to the drum industry, reflected: "This is *great*. It's a gorgeous hall and a huge event. It's a big step forward for *Modern Drummer*."

Pro-Mark's Pat Brown was as enthused as Gatzen. "The venue is terrific," Pat exclaimed. "It's like we've grown up a little bit around here. The acoustics are better, the sight lines are better, and the atmosphere is cooler."

Bobby Boos, Sabian artist rep, added, "This place has incredible acoustics. It's wonderful for drums." And Bobby was judging solely from soundchecks. In moments, we'd have the real deal.

## Raise The Curtain!

A roar of applause greeted *MD* publisher Isabel Spagnardi, senior vice president Lori Spagnardi, and editor in chief Bill Miller as they approached the mic' at center stage. Isabel was emotional and bittersweet as she welcomed loyal fans and newcomers and spoke in solemn memoriam of her late husband, Ron, *Modern Drummer*'s founding father.

Bill offered more heartfelt memories of Ron, then popped the big question, "So, what do you think of our new digs?" Another raucous meeting of hands resonated from floor to the upper levels. Let the festivities begin!

**Elóy Casagrande**, winner of *MD*'s Undiscovered Drummer contest in the under-eighteen category, had the unenviable task of going on first. The fourteen-year old from São Paulo, Brazil dazzled the crowd with his fluent vocabulary of Latin, jazz, funk, and rock chops. Eloy displayed formidable independence and control, juxtaposing left-foot clave with intricate double bass work. Apparently relaxed and confident, even when facing the world's most discerning audience of drummers, he blazed through an impressive solo and left the stage with a standing ovation.

Backstage Elóy admitted, "I was nervous. This is a big thing! *Modern Drummer* is very important in Brazil." It was a classic case of, "If you can make it here, you can make it anywhere."

Next up to bat was the highly decorated **Jason Bittner**, voted Best Up & Coming Drummer last year in *MD*'s readers poll. Preceding his performance, *MD* senior editor Rick Van Horn conferred two new honors on Jason, presenting plaques for Best Metal Drummer and Best Recorded Performance, the latter for Bittner's powerhouse drumming on the Shadows Fall release *The War Within*.

Jason's thunderous double bass work shook the house as he played to backing tracks from *War*. If he seemed a trifle nervous at first when fielding questions from the audience, he quickly settled into a personable and entertaining discussion of technique, training, and stylistic influences. By the time Bittner had finished, it was obvious that he deserved all the accolades that have come his way.

Afterwards Jason caught his breath backstage and delivered his verdict: "I think I did alright. My solo wasn't great, but I played the songs right and conveyed what was necessary during the 'lesson' part." (Funny, aren't drummers their own worst critics?)

Splendid in his new dreads, **Rodney Holmes** was readying to follow Bittner. Known for his tenures with Santana, The Brecker Brothers, Joe Zawinul, and currently jam-band all-star Steve Kimock, Rodney draws from a wealth of diverse experience. What would he do today?

From behind a practice pad in his dressing room, Rodney revealed his strategy: "I'm going to go out, answer questions, and then play to backing tracks from my upcoming album—out later this year." Then he excused himself and went to work.

Rodney immediately captivated the crowd with his blinding hand and foot speed, complex Latin-funk chops, and commanding jazz-rock fusion technique. After a spellbinding solo, the soft-spoken Holmes stepped out from behind his small drumkit to a rousing ovation and answered questions about his technique, enticing the audience by performing excerpts from his solo. After crediting a portion of his scary chops to a study of Latin drumming, Rodney played along to fusion tracks. Another standing ovation indicated that he had made many new fans.

Next up was rising star **Keith Carlock**, who has gained considerable recognition for his groove work with Steely Dan, The Blues Brothers, and, most recently, Sting. Carlock began his performance with an impressive solo that demonstrated his unique, dynamic approach to the drumkit and his deep pocket feel. Then he called guitarist Wayne Krantz and bassist Tim Lefebvre to the stage, and the Wayne Krantz Trio proceeded to unleash extended instrumental improvisation.

Carlock's style was flowing and direct, particularly evident when he focused his attack on dual floor toms, uniquely angled *away* from him. Keith's discussion of the Moeller Technique was illuminating and reflected an extremely well-rounded approach to the instrument. It was easy to see why Carlock has made his way to the "A" list.

Backstage, Raul Rekow, who flew in from Denmark especially for the festival, was communing with his peers. Asked about his game plan for Sunday, when he would perform with Sheila E, Alex Acuña, and his former Santana running buddy Karl Perazzo, Raul replied, "I'm not sure. I think we'll just go up there and wing it and have fun! I've got to say that to be invited to the Modern Drummer Festival is the pinnacle of my career. It's really what every drummer or percussionist dreams of."

It was also a dream windfall for many ticket holders. Drum industry sponsors were particularly generous this year. For example, about those drumsets sitting in the lobby: There were two from Sonor and one each from Tama and Pacific. They were drawn as door prizes, as were heads, sticks, cymbals, drumwear, and even a 39" gong. In total, over $25,000 in gear was up for grabs, with ticket draws occurring between each performance.

Time for a special pairing: funk-rock-maniac-meets-rock-legend. **Chad Smith** of the Red Hot Chili Peppers and **Ian Paice** of Deep Purple took the stage. Greeted with a standing ovation, Smith (winner of this year's Best Rock Drummer category in the readers poll) and Paice, classic rock icon, brought a bit of comic relief to the festival as they took questions from the crowd. Smith, in his own inimitable style, related several memorable "Chili Pepper moments," then tag-teamed Paice, who responded to questions about the making of historic Deep Purple tracks.

Speaking of the latter, Chad lived out a childhood fantasy by performing "Space Truckin'" alongside Paice, the original drummer on the track. The duo then brought up a young member of the audience (ironically named Ian) and placed him behind Smith's drumkit. Paice broke into Queen's famous "We Will Rock You" pattern, while Smith helped the young student find his groove.

To conclude their performance, each performed solos, Smith with a heavy, Spartan approach, Paice with jazz-influenced rock chops. Smith then gave the last word on what it takes to snag any gig, playing an unwavering rock groove that seemed to build like an ocean wave. Chad and Ian left the stage to another standing ovation.

Saturday's final act was an unlikely collaboration of prog metal giant **Danny Carey** (Tool), who brought along his quartet VOLTO!, *and* monster drummer **Kirk Covington**—on keyboards and drums. The band, which has gigged in LA clubs, obviously enjoyed every minute interpreting classic rock and fusion gems. Covington's soulful keyboard work and powerful voice seemed to penetrate every corner of the hall, while his occasional double-drumming bouts with Carey posed an interesting contrast—Kirk's flashy polyrhythmic chops with Danny's heavy, aggressive rock technique. The band closed Saturday's festivities with a burning encore of Led Zeppelin's "Good Times, Bad Times."

The house was still buzzing as Kirk, perspiring

profusely, made his way backstage. "We had *fun*," he admitted. It wouldn't be the last time someone echoed this sentiment.

## Sunday: The Crowd Speaks

Day two and the show was barely an hour away. We chatted with folks waiting outside on the lawn. Mike Adams and his son Nick from Pennsylvania were eagerly awaiting the Sunday lineup. Mike, who was wearing a borrowed state trooper's shirt, owned up, "My goal before the day is out is to meet Mr. Roy Haynes."

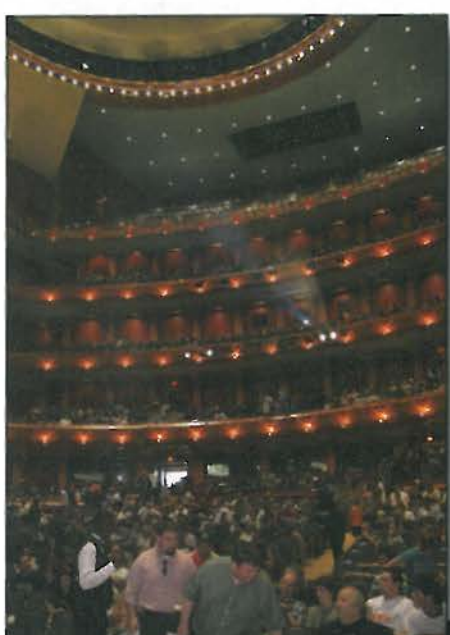
Mark Horton and Jackie Horton, son and mom, had come all the way from Detroit. It was Mark's first *MD* festival. "I've come for inspiration," he said. "Saturday's prime inspiration was Rodney Holmes, particularly those intricate cowbell patterns."

Kevin Brady, Terry Brady, and Bob Legg, from Saugerties, New York, concurred that Holmes was a highlight thus far. Said Bob, "With Rodney, everything is creative and floating. It's not just a matter of speed."

What could possibly top *that* today? "Well," Bob smiled, "winning a new drumset would be cool! And we're *very* excited about seeing Sheila E."

Dave Haller, Kelly Paletta, and Jerry Deupree (ex Morphine drummer) were keen to catch Roy Haynes. Kelly reminisced, "Back in high school, I listened over and over to Roy's *Snap, Crackle*. It was so many years ago and such a big influence on me." Added Jerry, "Think of the timeline in terms of who he's played with: Louis Armstrong through Miles to the present!"

At that moment, last call came to enter the hall.



## The Performers Answer

Sunday's program led off with the winner of the over-eighteen category of the Undiscovered Drummer contest: **Jon Willis** of Santa Barbara, California. Willis focused his performance on clean groove playing, augmented by tasteful, dynamic fills—clearly a winning formula.

As he triumphantly exited the stage, bolstered by an ovation, Jon confided to us, "I think I did okay—this is the biggest venue I've *ever* played. I tried to make my solo appealing to drummers and non-drummers."

In Saturday fashion, Sunday's feature lineup began with metal. Before **Chris Adler** (Lamb Of God) played, Rick Van Horn brought out Jason Bittner to pass the torch of Best Up & Coming Drummer to Adler, who won the award this year.

Like Bittner, Adler showed fierce double bass chops and dynamic hand speed. He seemed to lean more to the progressive side, as he performed metal grooves with his brother, Willie, on guitar. After Chris responded to questions dealing with his metal drumming roots, he performed several complicated instrumental pieces with a unique pedal technique that brought fans to their feet.

Back in a dressing room, Walfredo Reyes Sr. was reflecting on the fact that he'd been chosen to receive an Editors Achievement Award. "It's an honor," he enthused. "I think I'm the first Latino in that context—and Cuban, too. The performers here—Alex Acuña and Sheila—go back with me for years. It's going to be a great Latino show."

LP founder Martin Cohen added, "It's an amazing feat to appear in the NJPAC. *Modern Drummer* is doing everything right. You know, other magazines don't have much content and are getting thinner, but *Modern Drummer* is getting thicker and thicker."

Next through the gate was **Jojo Mayer**, appearing with his band Nerve. A respected clinician and drum 'n' bass innovator, Mayer demonstrated "reverse engineering" techniques. That is, employing the textures and rhythms of computer-generated music. He replicated these sounds on an acoustic drumkit in an improvisational musical format that owed to breakbeat, jungle, drum 'n' bass, Nu-Skool, and the latest mutations of electronica. Mayer's fluid and deft chops were hypnotic in their effect and garnered him and his band a standing ovation.

Pacing the hallway, **Zoro**, who most recently worked with Lenny Kravitz, was glowing. "This event—and this venue—are incredible," he enthused. "I feel privileged to play here. It's a treasure. I feel like an opera performer in the 1700s." Regarding his stately black hat, Zoro explained, "In honor of those who came before me, I come *decked out*!"

Then he hit the stage for a clinic-like presentation on the half-time shuffle. Zoro stated, restated, and tore apart basic triplet patterns that constitute the pattern we associate with Purdie, Porcaro, and Bonham. Some of Zoro's hand and foot variations were frankly stunning. All the while, the theme was solid time and confident feel as he played to backing tracks. Zoro concluded with a crowd-pleasing Caribbean-style piece, which he dedicated to his late mother. No doubt she would have been proud to see him write the book on dynamics, touch, control, and groove. Zoro's many "inside techniques," such as laying a cross-stick against rim and mambo bell simultaneously (for added sonic oomph), went over big.

In a quiet corner backstage, we found **Alex Acuña**. "I'm excited to play," he said softly. "Music is spiritual for me and I'm very relaxed, happy just to do my part." Commenting on a Zildjian K Custom Dry Complex Ride he was debuting, Alex explained, "Sounds are great for inspiring you and enhancing your creativity."

In a few moments, Alex joined **Sheila E**, **Karl Perazzo**, and **Raul Rekow** on stage. It was a much-anticipated collaboration, as evidenced by the lengthy standing ovation that greeted the four percussion greats (who had never performed together as a unit). An unseen signal initiated a full-blown Latin rhythm jam session, each player exploding with solo bursts that segued beautifully. Combining Afro-Cuban, South American, Caribbean, and American hip-hop and funk rhythms, the legendary performers demonstrated that working together as a rhythm section involves providing firm rhythmic support and allowing each other the freedom to improvise.

Acuña was equally impressive on drumset and percussion. Sheila also performed an entertaining drum solo, bringing the dynamics down to *pianissimo* as she sang her hit "Glamorous Life," which had the crowd singing along. During the quieter moments, she would surprise with furious and complex drumset fills. Sheila spoke to the audience on the importance of dynamics and musical playing, and related an anecdote of a pivotal recording with Marvin Gaye. Over on stage left, it was obvious that Karl Perazzo and Raul Rekow were simpatico, exhibiting seamless, brilliant percussion work on congas and timbales. The set was a tremendous crowd pleaser.

Behind the curtains, we spotted **Roy Haynes**, who had turned eighty on March 13, sauntering with a snappy gait towards the stage. The jazz legend—who was once declared by *Esquire* as one of America's best dressed—paused for a quick question. What were his plans for the evening? "*A bit of fun* is planned," he quipped, of course without losing a beat.

Before Roy could lay sticks to heads, *MD*'s Bill Miller led the crowd in a joyous and belated "happy birthday to Roy." Let's put it this way: The jury is out on whether drummers can hold a tune as well as they can hold a groove!

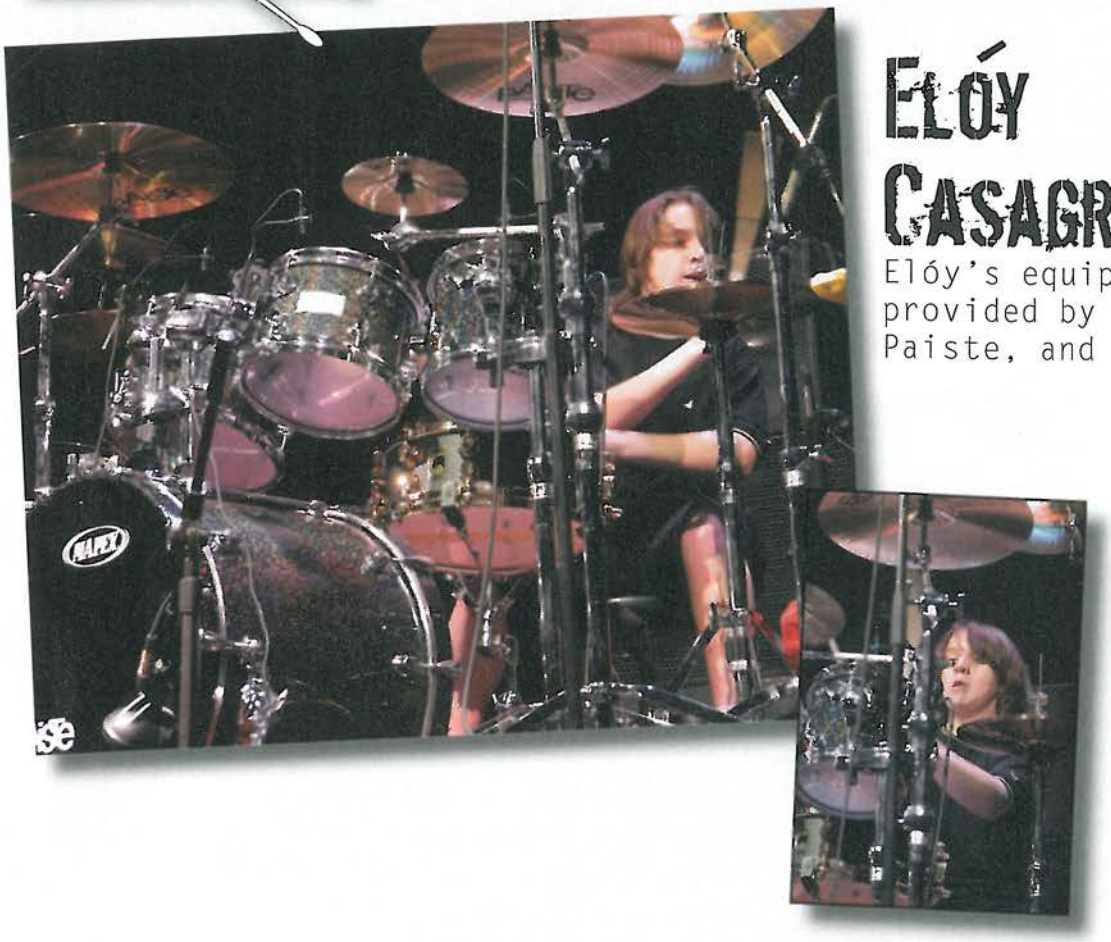
There was electricity in the air as Haynes and his young quartet played the opening strains of their set. There seemed a tacit recognition that this man had shaped the sound and vocabulary of modern jazz drumming. Roy Haynes treated us to a set of sophisticated acoustic jazz, during which he displayed exceptionally nimble mallet, stick, and brush work. Roy's touch, feel, interaction, dynamics, phrasing, and listening were finely honed.

Roy left the dazzled crowd wanting for nothing, performing at the level of a man half his age. We were truly in the presence of greatness.

And greatness defined this year's festival—leading off with a fourteen-year-old Brazilian up-and-comer and wrapping up with an American jazz legend *five times* his age. What a spectacular and diverse lineup! Ron Spagnardi was surely smiling down with fatherly approval and unselfish pride.

No question about it, the Modern Drummer Festival Weekend is *the* place for drummers to go and refuel their creative juices. Moreover, as Roy Haynes put it, this was the place to go and *have some fun*.

# Newly Discovered Drummers!

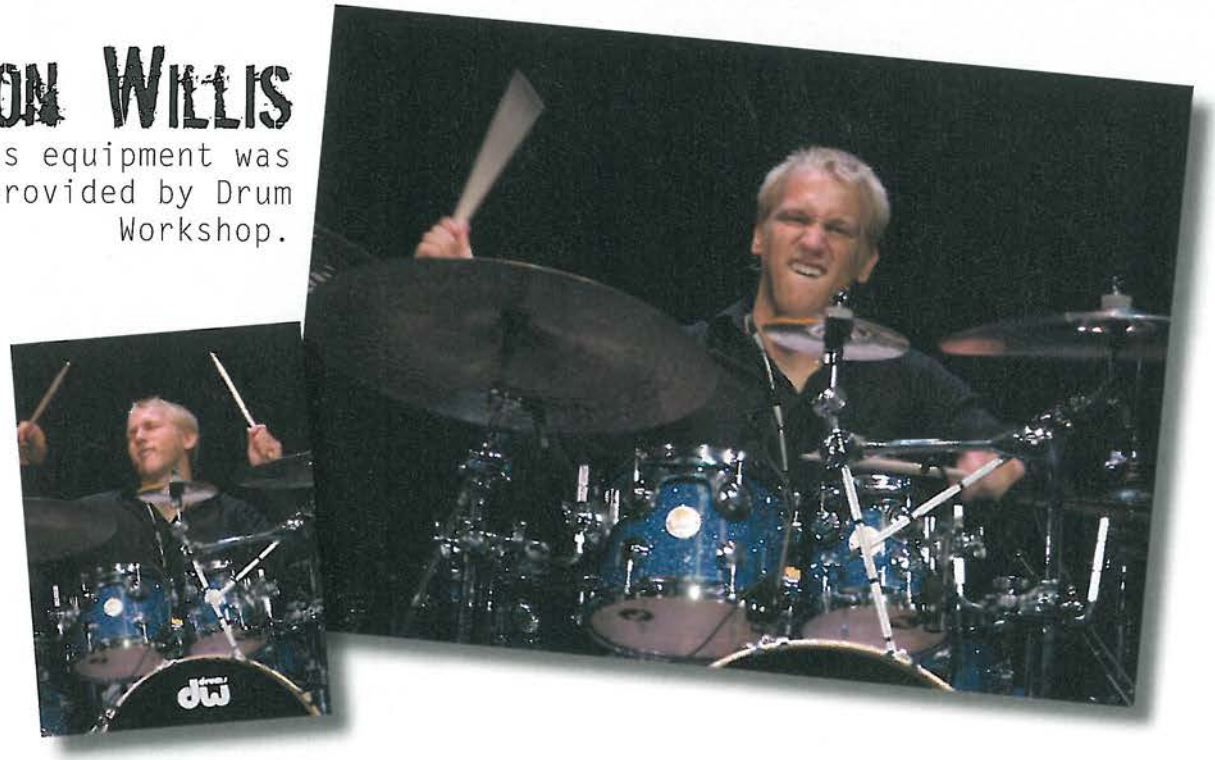



## Elóy Casagrande

Elóy's equipment was provided by Mapex, Paiste, and Evans.

## Jon Willis

Jon's equipment was provided by Drum Workshop.



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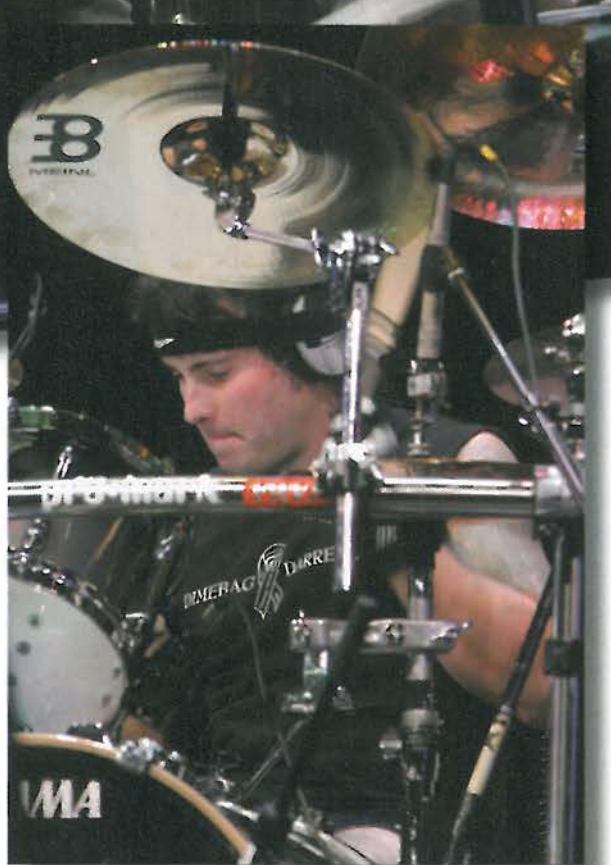

# Jason Bittner

Jason was sponsored by Tama, Meinl, Pro-Mark, and Evans.

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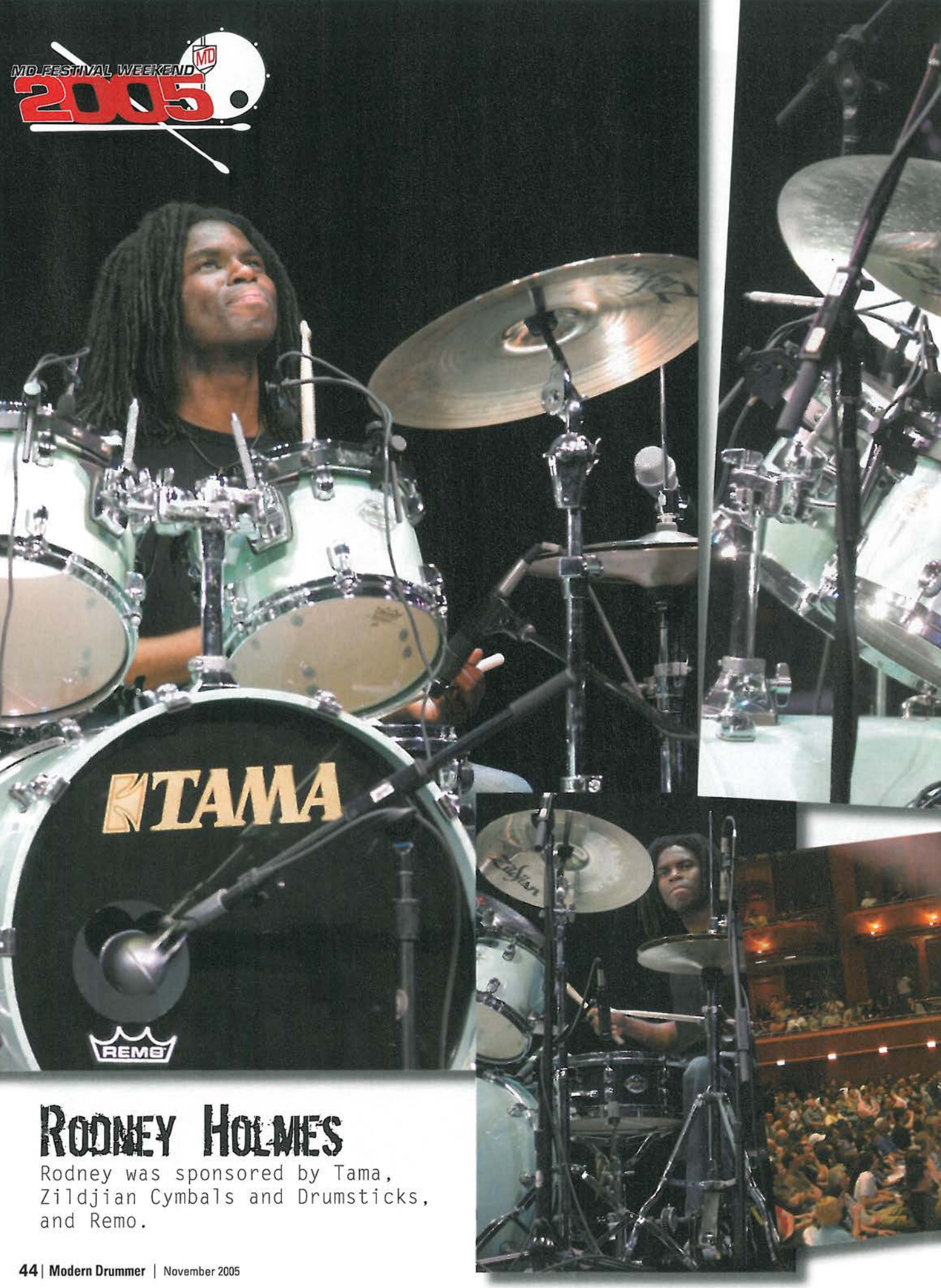
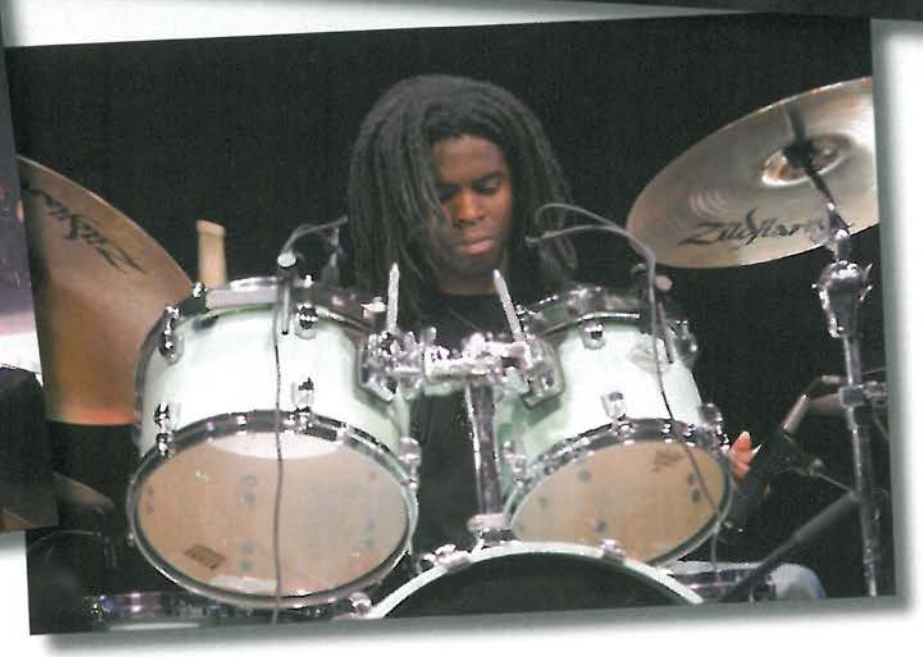



# Rodney Holmes

Rodney was sponsored by Tama, Zildjian Cymbals and Drumsticks, and Remo.



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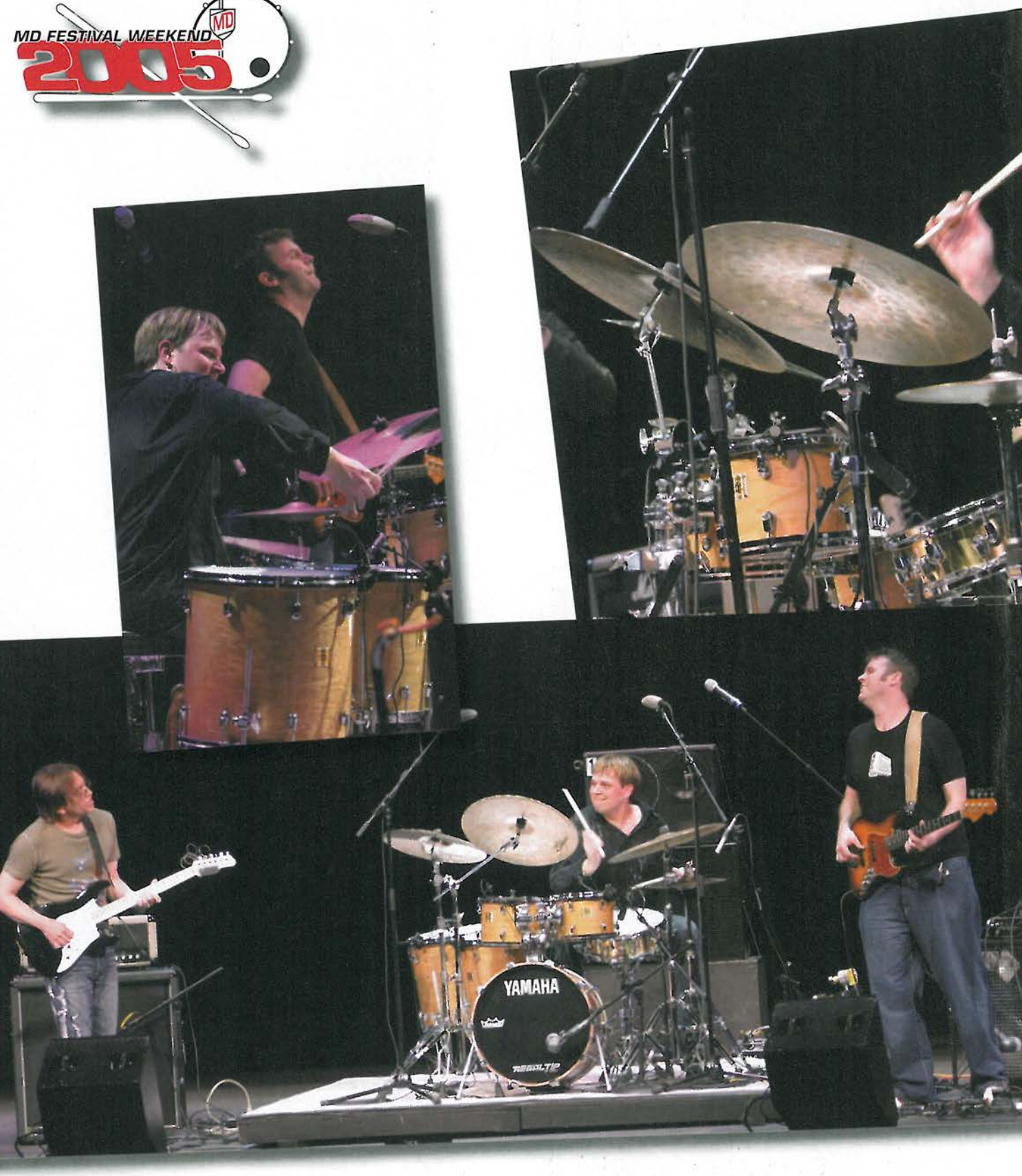
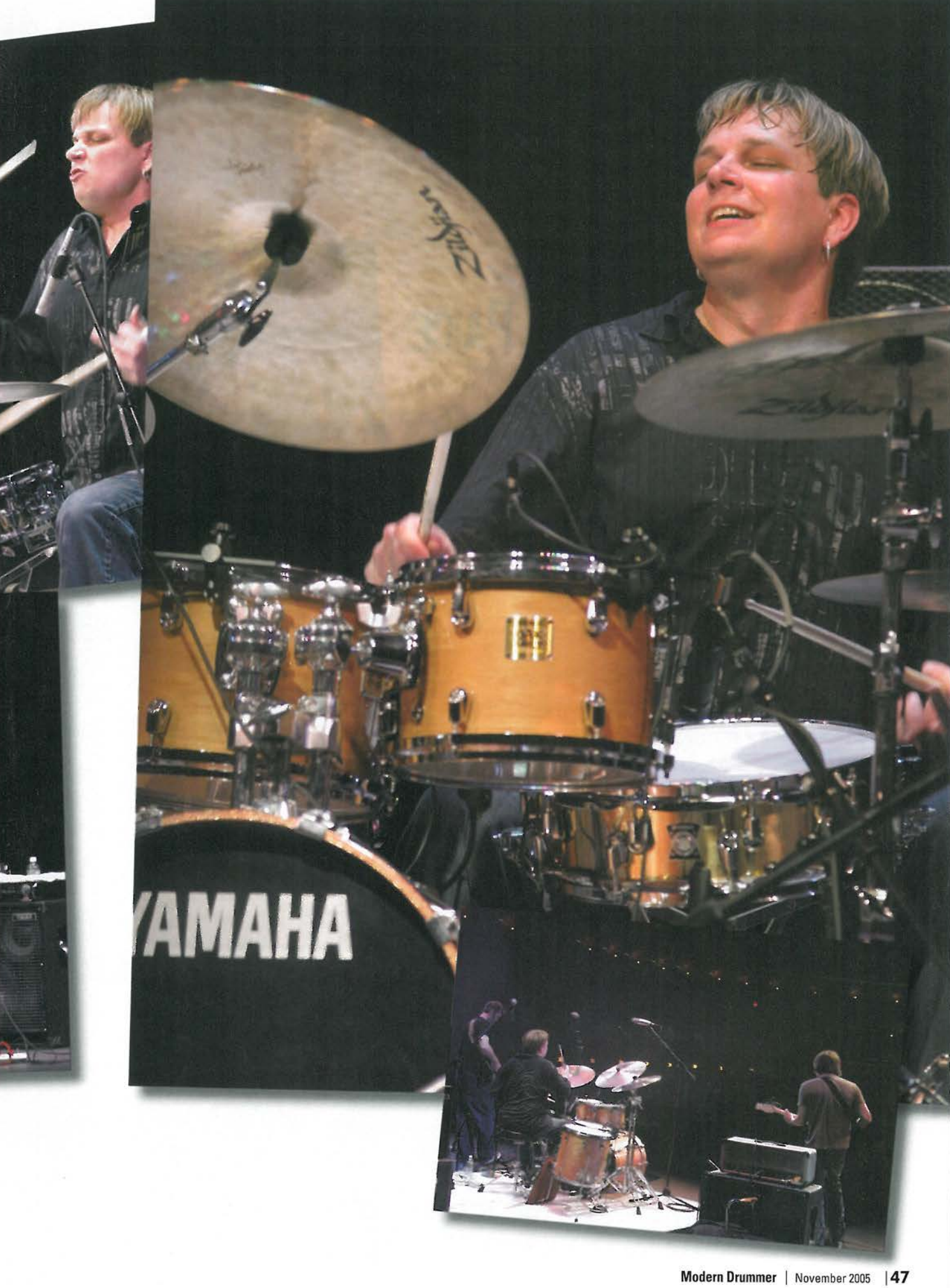



# KEITH CARLOCK

Keith was sponsored by Yamaha, Zildjian, Regal Tip, and Remo.


YAMAHA

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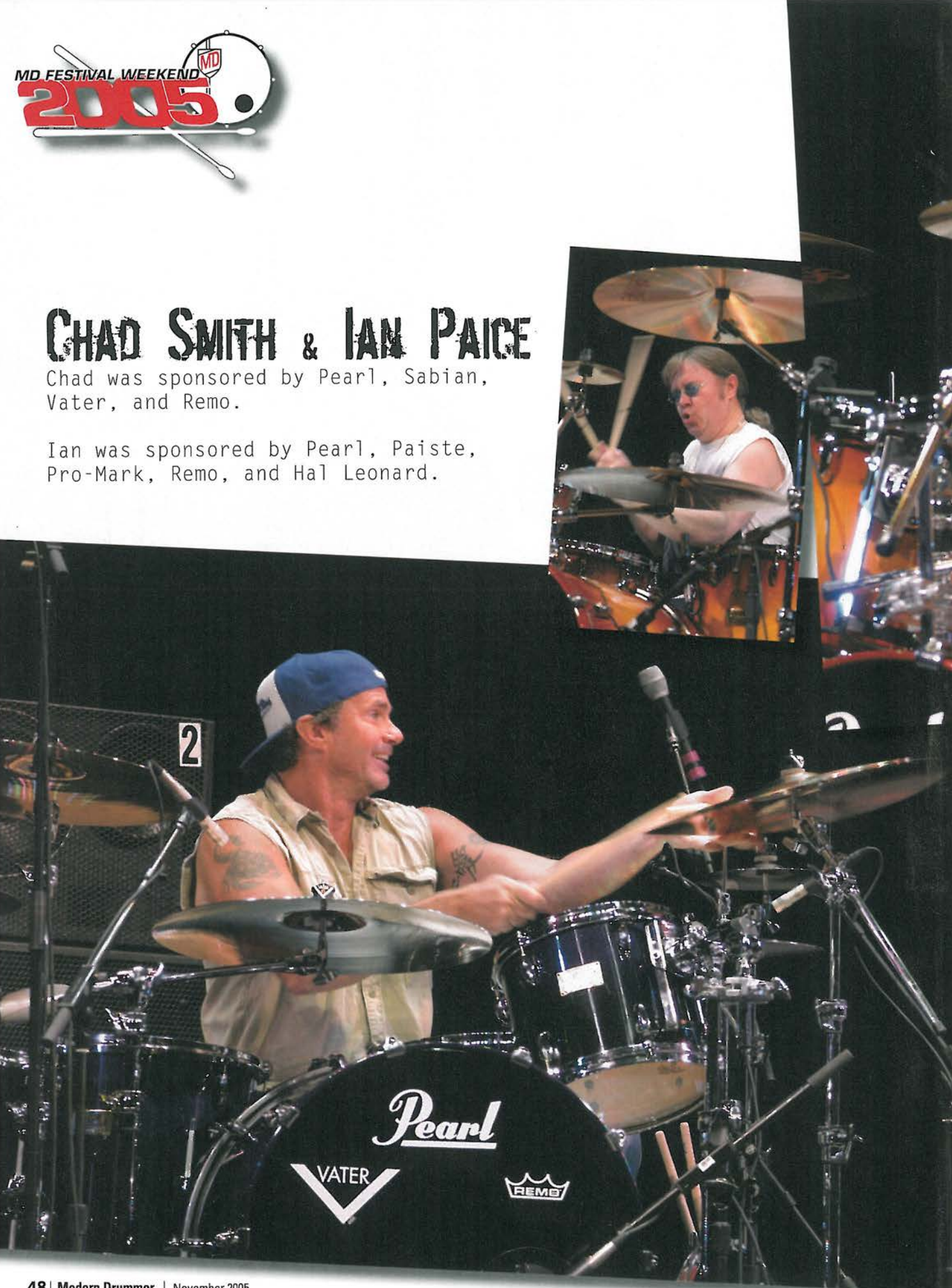
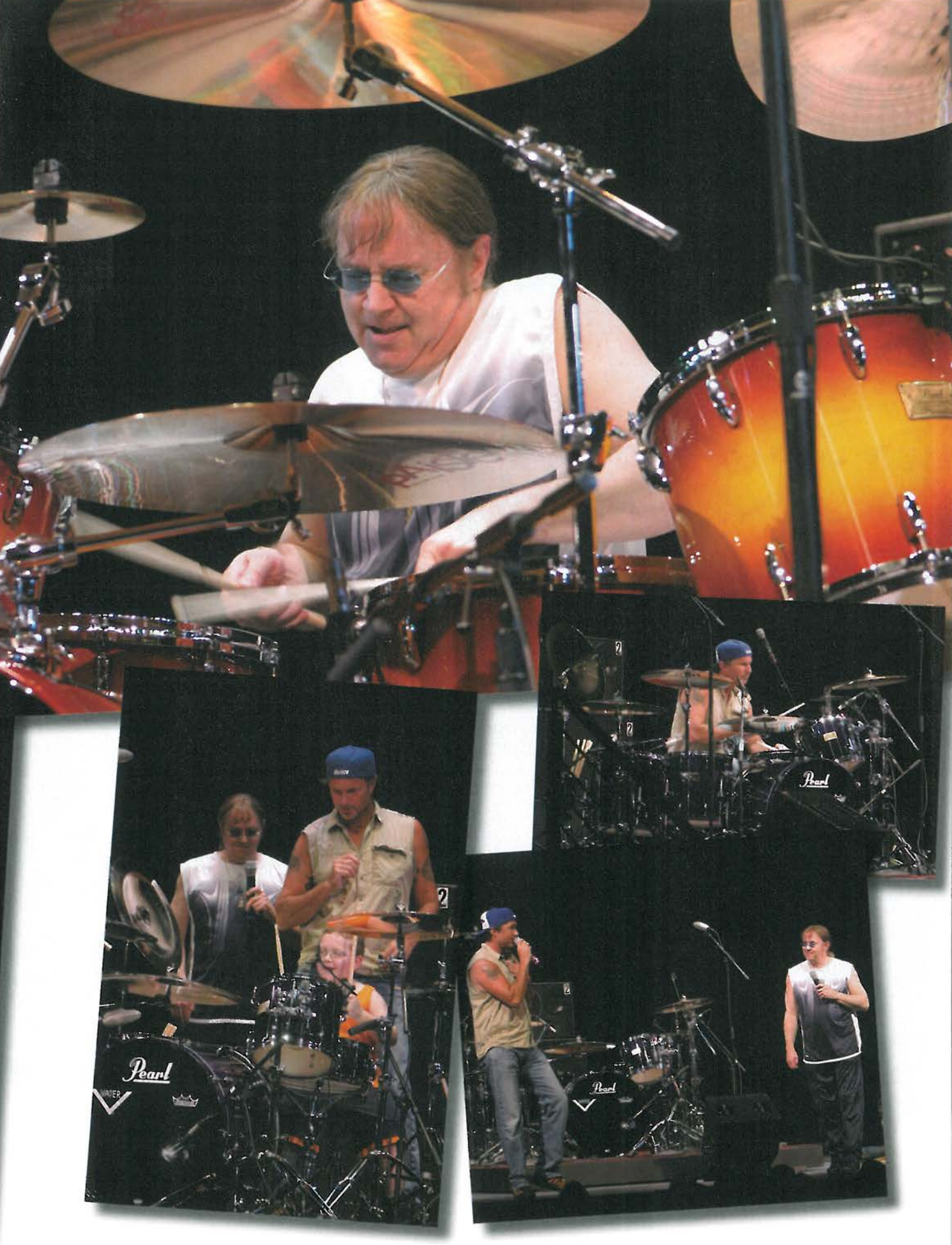
# Chad Smith & Ian Paice

Chad was sponsored by Pearl, Sabian, Vater, and Remo.

Ian was sponsored by Pearl, Paiste, Pro-Mark, Remo, and Hal Leonard.

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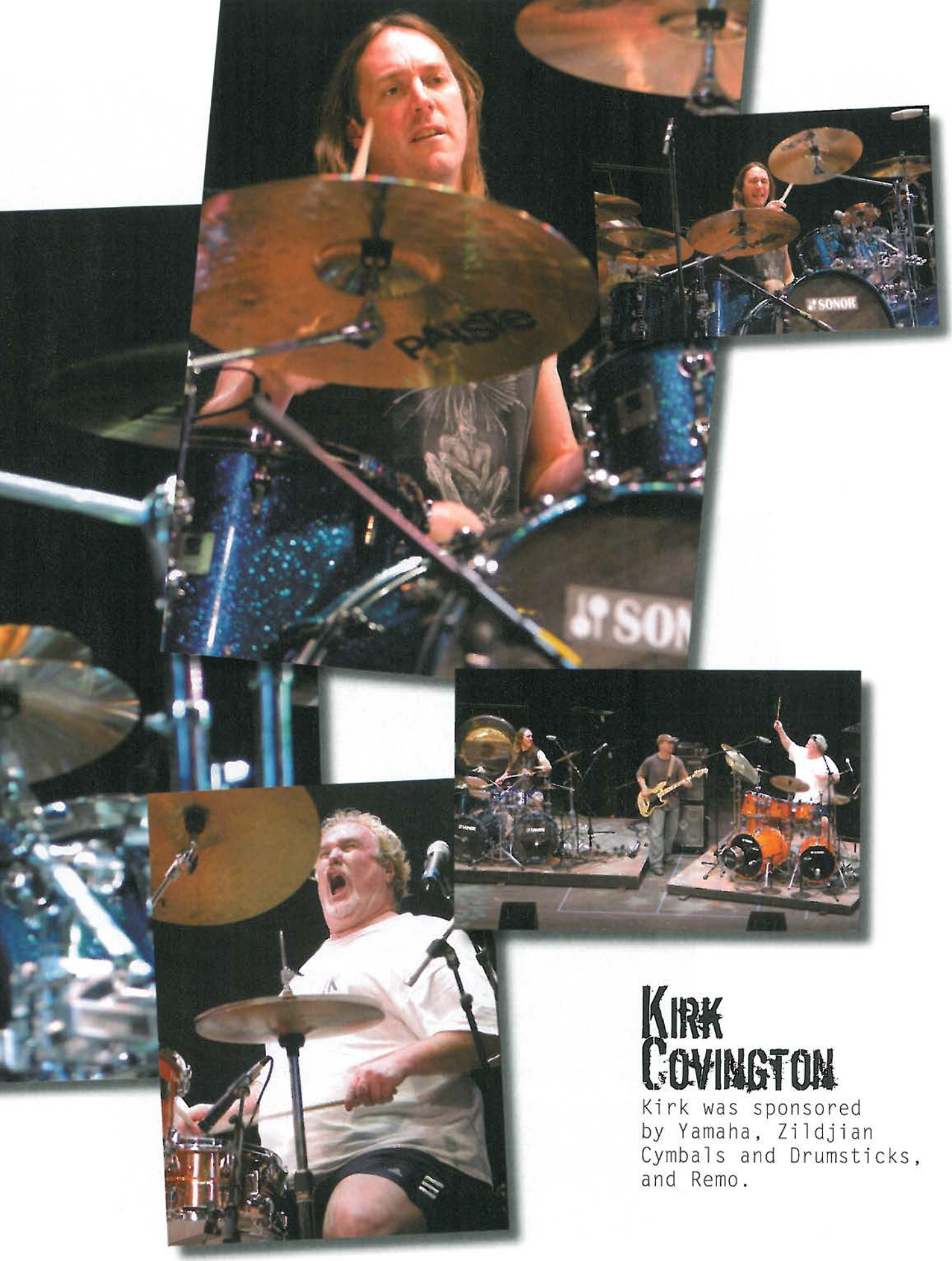
# Danny Carey & Volto!

Danny was sponsored by Sonor, Paiste, Vic Firth, and Evans.




# KIRK COVINGTON

Kirk was sponsored by Yamaha, Zildjian Cymbals and Drumsticks, and Remo.

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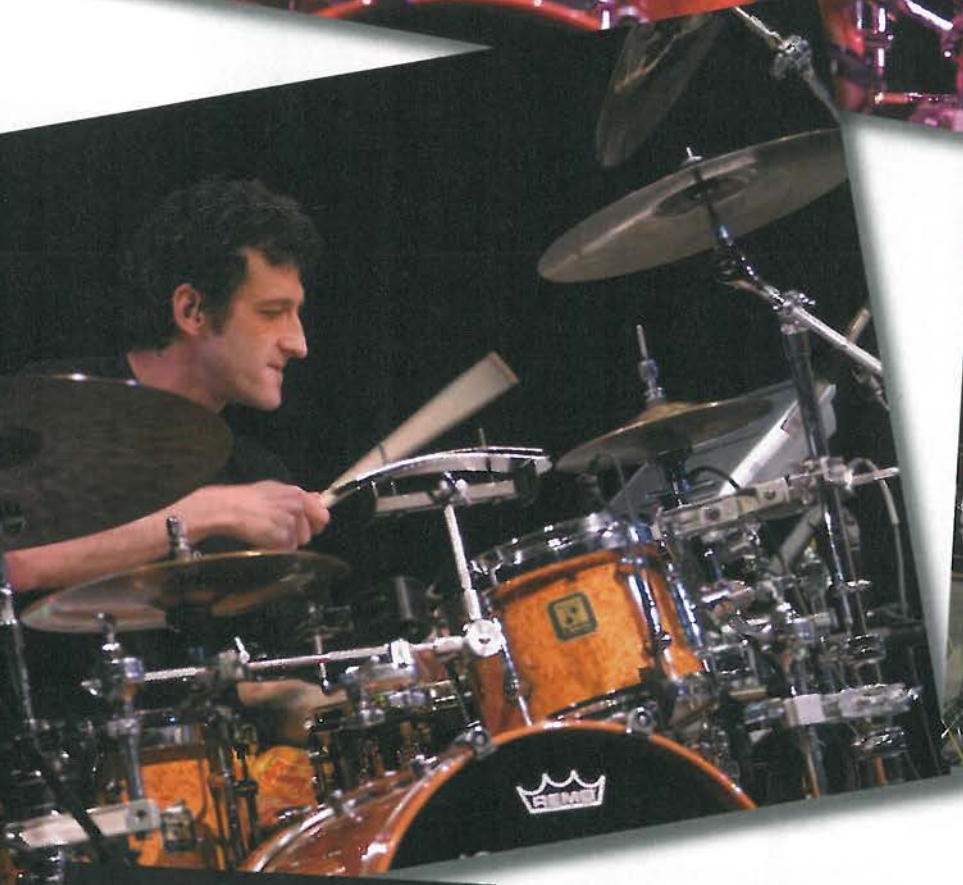
# Chris Adler

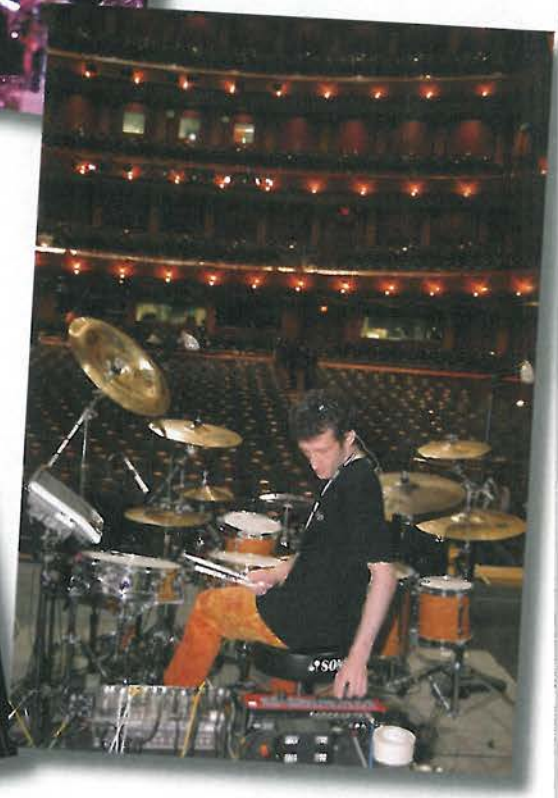
Chris was sponsored by Mapex, Meinl, Pro-Mark, Aquarian, Gibraltar, and Axis.

Gibraltar

Gibraltar
NAPEX

MD FESTIVAL WEEKEND
2005





# Jojo Mayer

Jojo was sponsored by Sonor, Sabian, Vic Firth, and Remo.

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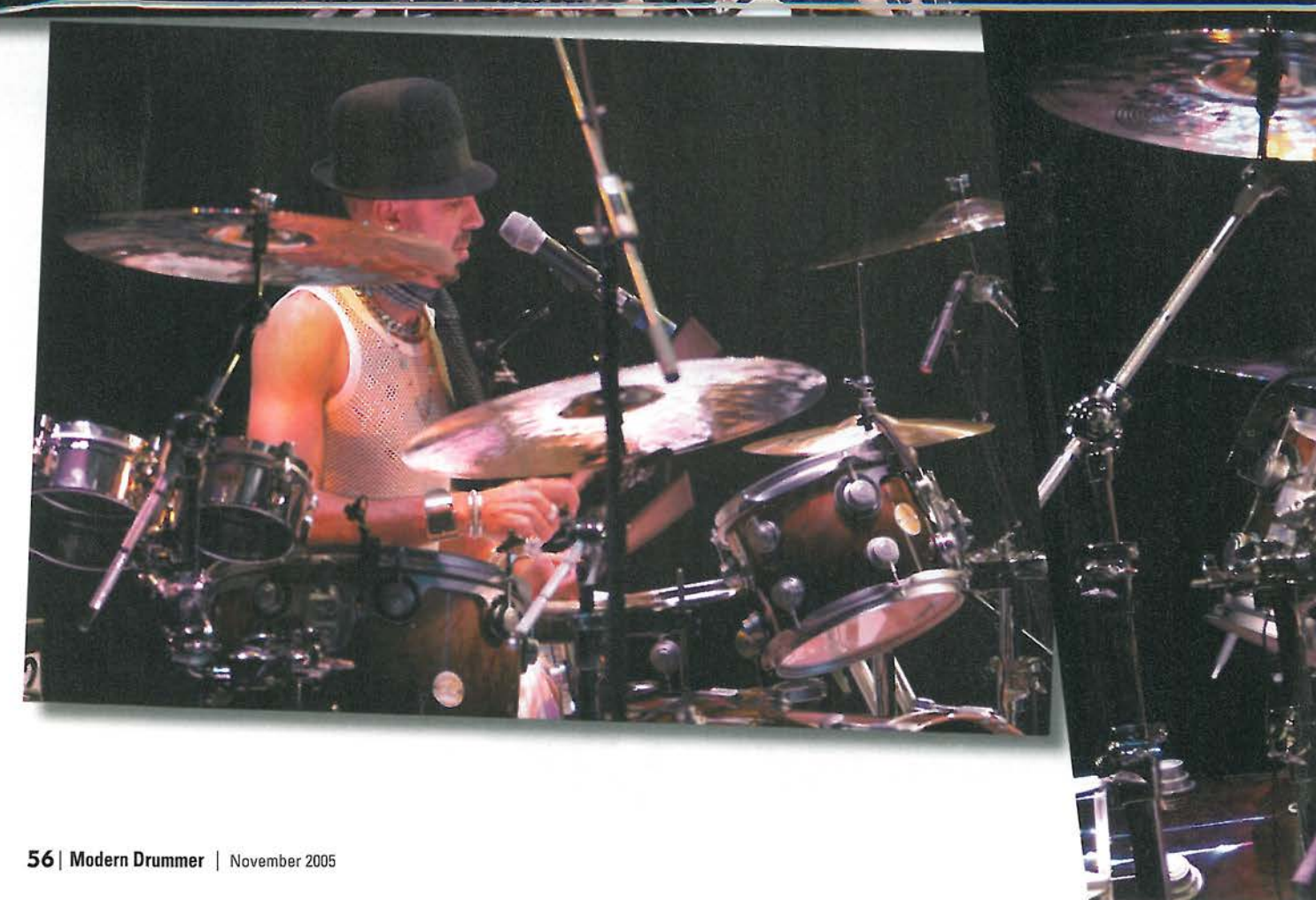
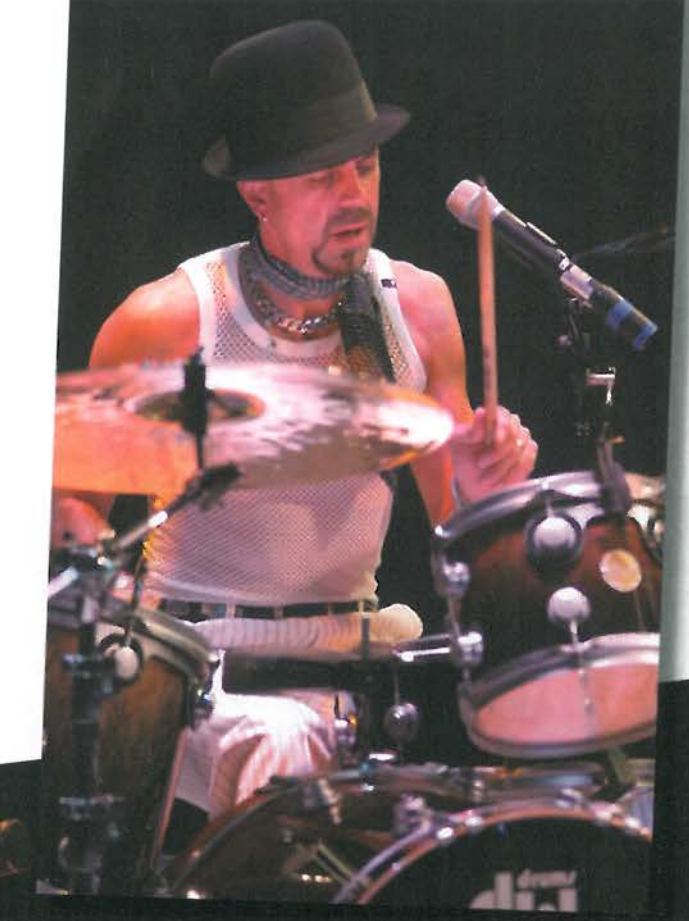




# Zoro

Zoro was sponsored by Drum Workshop, Sabian, Latin Percussion, Vic Firth, Evans, and Audix.

MD FESTIVAL WEEKEND 2005

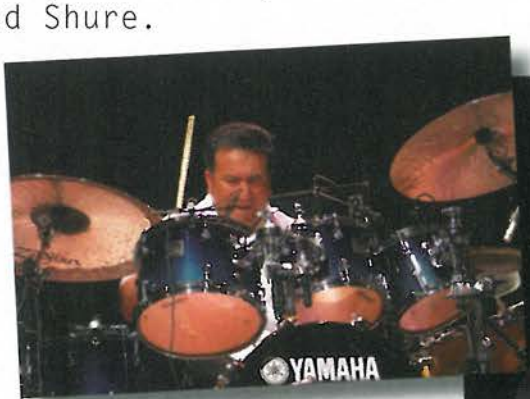
# Sheila E, Alex Acuña, Raul Rekow, & Karl Perazzo

Sheila was sponsored by Drum Workshop, Paiste, Toca, Vic Firth, Evans, and Shure.

Alex was sponsored by Yamaha, Zildjian, Toca, Vic Firth, Evans, and Gibraltar.

Raul was sponsored by Latin Percussion, Sabian, Remo, and Shure.

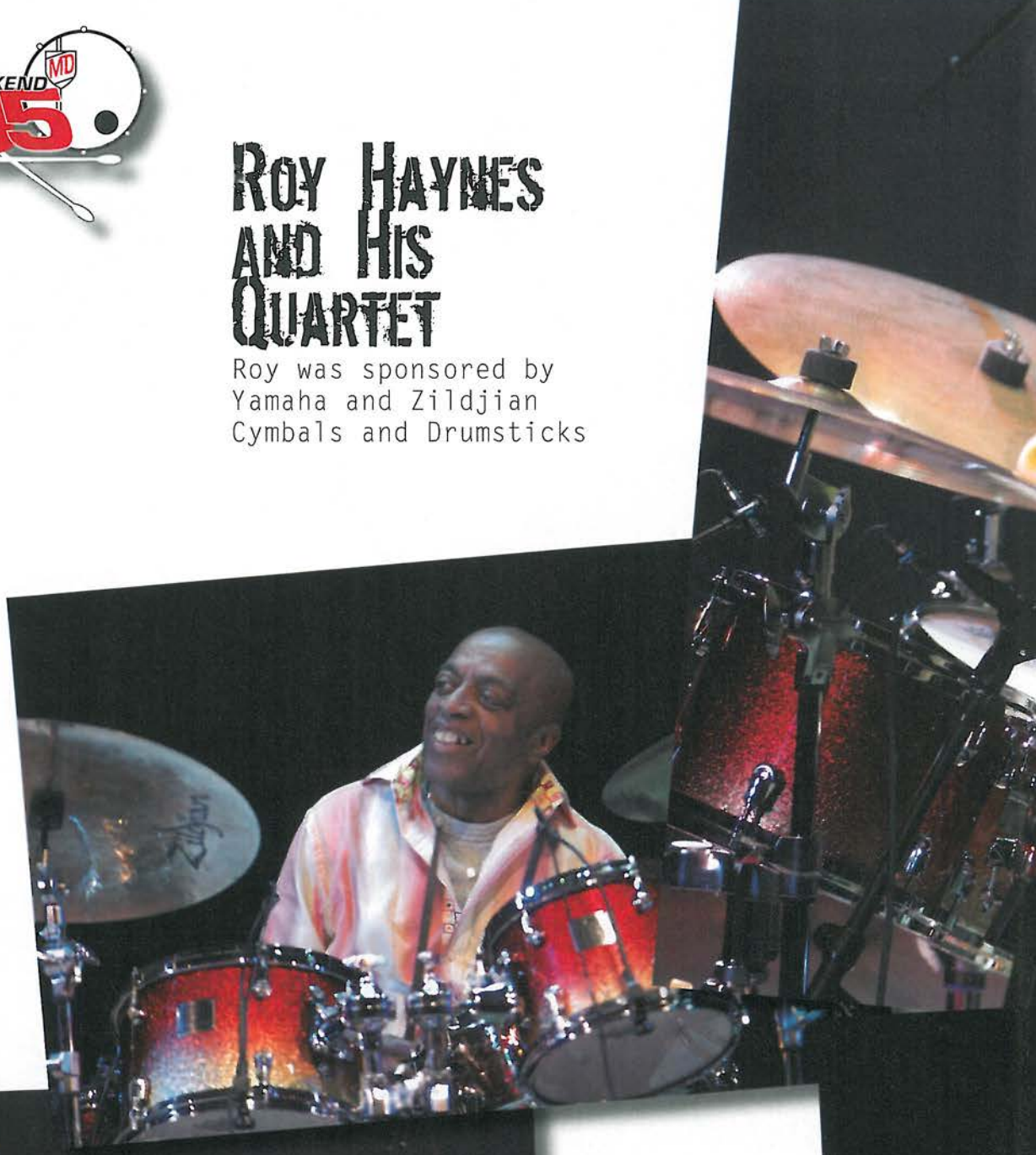
Karl was sponsored by Latin Percussion, Sabian, Vater, Remo, Gibraltar, and Shure.



MD FESTIVAL WEEKEND 2005

# Roy Haynes and His Quartet

Roy was sponsored by Yamaha and Zildjian Cymbals and Drumsticks



See more Festival photos at www.moderndrummer.com

YAMAHA CRAFTSMAN PROFILE

# FROM BIRTH...

Job Title: Shell Staining Specialist
Years Experience: 25 years
EMIKO NAKAYAMA

"Each ply of wood has its own personality. The individual wood grain of each piece is the fingerprint for that ply, and it's my job to enhance the natural beauty of its grain. In the end, the attraction to our instruments must be from both their sound and appearance. Everyday, my focus is 100% on this."

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ARTISTS IN THE KNOW

# TO PERFORMANCE

YAMAHA DRUM ARTIST PROFILE

## ANTONIO SANCHEZ

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# The Starr Treatment

## 21 Top Drummers Ask Ringo 35 Questions

So much has been asked and written about Ringo's life over the past forty-plus years that it's almost impossible to report something unique. But as time moves on, there are whole new generations of music and drumming fans that are just now discovering the phenomenal impact that The Beatles and Ringo have had on music history.

Richard Starkey was born on July 7, 1940 in a working-class section of Liverpool, England known as Dingle. In December of 1957, his step-dad, Harry Graves, bought him his first real set of drums. Two years later, in November of '59, Ritchie joined up with local friends Rory Storm & The Hurricanes. By 1960, they were the top-ranked band in Liverpool.

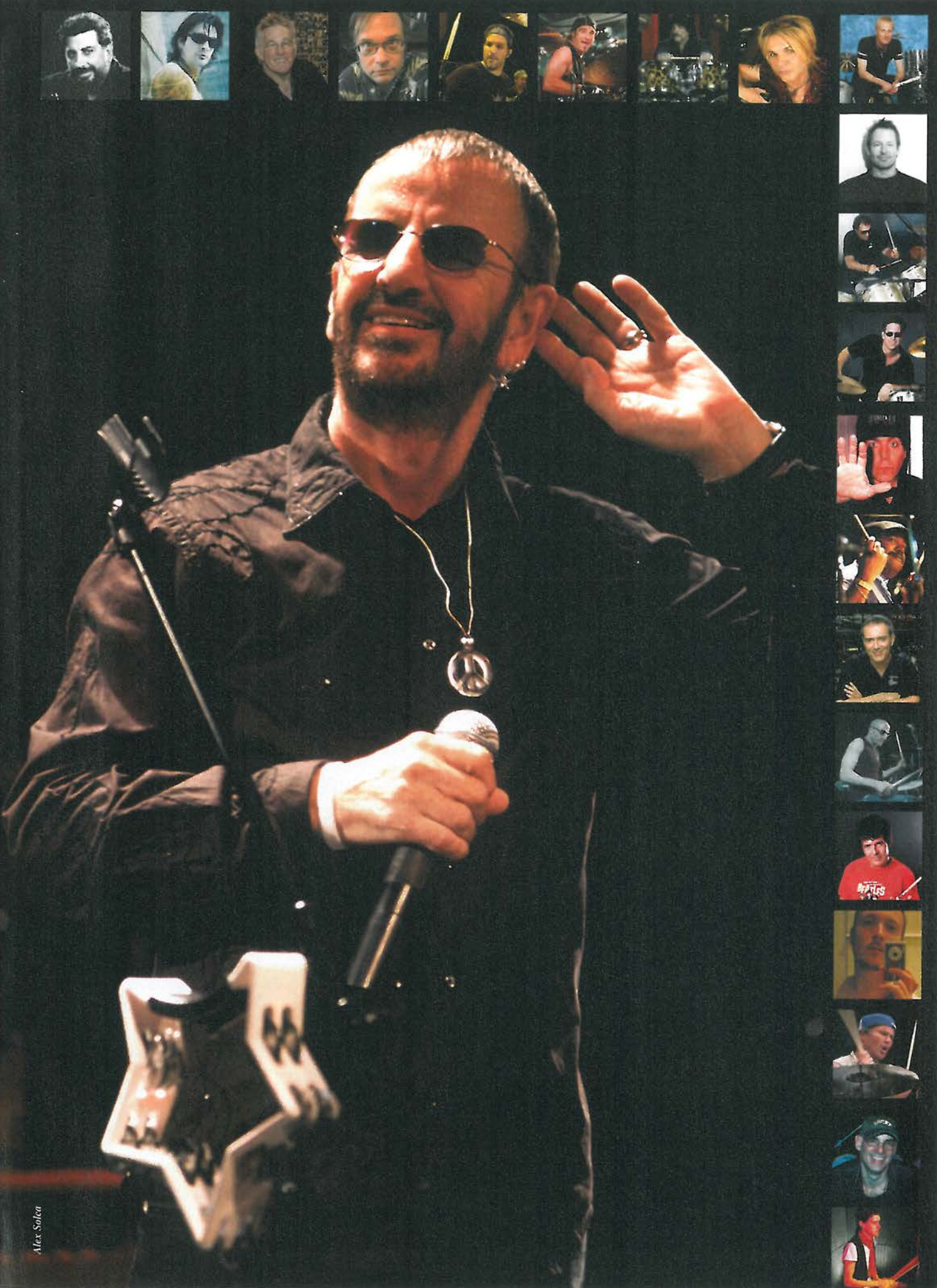
By the fall of that year, Rory & The Hurricanes were headlining at the Kaiserkeller in Hamburg, Germany, where Ringo—as he was now being called—became friends with another local Liverpool act, The Beatles. (They were booked to play at a smaller club down the street.) They hit it off immediately, and Ringo would often find himself sitting in with the group in Germany, and then more often when both groups were back home in England.

Ringo officially joined The Beatles on August 18, 1962, two weeks before their recording session for EMI at Abbey Road Studios. The rest, as they say, is history. Ringo went on to tour, record, and change the world with The Beatles until their infamous break-up in 1969.

After the tremendous success and popularity of The Beatles, most musicians would have settled back and rested on their laurels. But Ringo continued to move forward, and to this day he's maintained a substantial solo career with many hit records of his own. Through the years, he's been a studio musician, starred in films and on TV, dabbled in art and photography, and been the leader of The All-Starrs and now The Roundheads. Ringo has done all of this while also being a husband, a dad, and a grandfather—an amazing life for an amazing man.

*MD* recently caught up with Ringo for a chat about his latest CD, *Choose Love*. You can read that interview at www.moderndrummer.com. But for *this* interview, *MD* asked twenty-one top drummers, "What would you like to ask Ringo?" As you can imagine, everyone immediately had a question or two for the man many believe to be one of the greatest and most influential drummers of all time.

**by Billy Amendola**



Alex Salca

## **Rick Marotta** (studio great)

**Rick:** Where did you get the name Ringo?

**Ringo:** I got the name in Liverpool because I wore a lot of rings. In the neighborhood I came from, everybody had nicknames for the hardware they were carrying, like "Tommy The Hammerman." As you might have guessed, Tommy carried a hammer. I wore rings, and suddenly they were calling me, "Hey Rings, hey Rings." When I went to play with Rory [Storm], we all changed our names, so I changed my name to Ringo. That's how it happened.

**Rick:** Also, can I have one of your old snare drums?

**Ringo:** No, you can't have one of my old snare drums, you bugger.

## **Tommy Lee** (Mötley Crüe)

**Tommy:** What kit did you use on the *White Album*?

**Ringo:** On the *White Album*, well...all the kits were Ludwig. When I got my first Ludwig in '63, it was American and that was so exciting to me, so I've stayed with them. I do love the sound of Ludwig. I know that once in frustration I did go to another manufacturer, but it just didn't work out. Ludwig are the drums for me.

## **Denny Seiwell** (Wings)

**Denny:** When you went in the studio and sat down at the drumkit to record, what was your process of tuning and dampening to get the incredible sound that you always had?

**Ringo:** The dampening in The Beatles days were cigarette packs and dish cloths. The top skins were always really well dampened, and I felt it gave a more bottom-y feel to my sound. Of course, on the snare it was great. And the toms also. It gave the toms more depth. But it was all dish cloths and cigarette packs.

**Denny:** Why did you select the cymbals that you used? Was it ever from hearing another record on which you loved the sound, or was it just what you thought cymbals should sound for your style music?

**Ringo:** I used the same cymbals on probably 99% of the Beatles tracks. I had one ride cymbal that started splitting around the bell, and Jim Keltner drilled two holes in it to stop the crack from going right round the bell and falling apart. But anyway, I did retire it and I have it on the wall in one of our homes. It's called "the cymbal of the house." So the cymbals were usually all the same.

**Denny:** Lastly, do you truly understand how important your contribution to drumming is...and to the rest of us drummers?

**Ringo:** Well, that is really great of you to say, and I'm beginning to realize it because good drummers like you tell me so. Thank you.

## **Dennis Diken** (The Smithereens)

**Dennis:** Who were your drum heroes? Are there any records or drummers that you see as major inspirations?

**Ringo:** Anybody who knows me knows I mention Cozy Cole. He did this record, "Topsy Part 1 & 2," which was the only drum record I ever bought. And Gene Krupa, you can't dismiss him. I went to see him in movies. And Al Jackson of course, on every great record ever made. So they're three. But I never bought records for the drums, I bought records for that record—the sound of the whole thing together. I feel that's how I play. I play with the song, I play with the track, and I play with the other musicians. And I don't buy records for drum solos—although John Bonham has probably done the only great one as far as I'm concerned. And he played that with his hands. [laughs]

Henry Diltz

# Mark Hudson

## Inside The Mind Of Ringo's Producer

Some of you may be familiar with Mark Hudson from back in the day, when he was a member of the '70s TV show and pop-trio The Hudson Brothers. Along with his real-life siblings Bill and Brett, the group went on to enjoy success with a number of Beatle-ish hits. (If you're a fan of bands like The Beach Boys, ELO, Badfinger, or any of the '70s power-pop groups, you may want to get your hands on a copy of their 1995 release, *So You're A Star: The Best Of The Hudson Brothers.*)

These days Mark is known more as a producer, guitarist, and vocalist, but he started out as a drummer. "Oh yeah, I was the drummer in The Hudson Brothers," he says. "That was my gig. Every now and then I come out of retirement."

After the Hudson Brothers TV show had its run, Mark stayed in front of the camera as the neighbor in actress Geena Davis's NBC sitcom *Sara*, and from '86 to '87 he served as musical director for *The Late Show With Joan Rivers*.

Since then Mark's résumé as a songwriter, vocalist, and producer reads like a music-biz who's who list. In 1994 he was a Grammy nominee for co-writing Aerosmith's song "Livin' On The Edge." In 2000 he teamed with Aerosmith to co-produce their CD *Just Push Play*. He's also worked with Hanson, Celine Dion, Toto, Cher, Carole King, Timothy B. Schmit, Jars Of Clay, Bon Jovi, Colony, Ozzy Osbourne, The Baha Men, and, of course, Ringo Starr, to name just a few.

"It's so weird," Mark says, "because my first drumset was Ringo's Ludwig model. I said to Ringo one time, I can only pretend to play like you. That's all I know. You were my inspiration."

That inspiration has certainly paid off. In fact, it's led Mark to be a major player in Ringo's touring band, The Roundheads. (Check out the band's recently released live DVD.) Hudson also co-wrote, played, produced, and sang on the last three Ringo solo recordings, *Vertical Man, RingoRama,* and the recently released *Choose Love*.

**"Out of everybody I've worked with, Ringo's the one who knows how to play a song. He does it better than anyone."**

**MD:** What's it like writing with and producing Ringo?

**Mark:** The strange part of it is, I'm such a huge fan that sometimes the biggest dilemma I run into is the fact that I have to produce him and *not* be a fan. I became a drummer in The Hudson Brothers because of him—I thought he was great. And now we're cutting tracks and I hear that beat and that sound that's so familiar—I turn around and there he is. And then at the same time, sometimes I've got to be able to go, "Hey Ringo, why don't you try this" or "Why don't we do

continued on page 71

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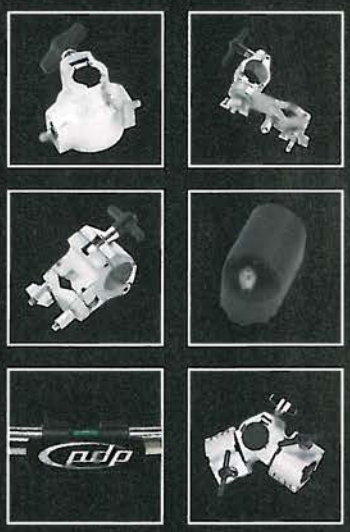

pdp

Terry Bozzio

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# Ringo Starr

## Charlie Benante (Anthrax)

**Charlie:** I have read that you felt "Rain" was your finest performance. Can you tell us why?

**Ringo:** I never said it was my *finest* performance. I just felt at that time, with "Rain," that I played differently than I had before. There were a lot more fast fills in there, which is different for me, because my style usually is to play in half time, whatever that time may be. And I just thought I was doing a lot of faster things on that one. I do love the track.

**Charlie:** How long would you go before you changed your snare drum head in the studio?

**Ringo:** Forever. Also, like the cymbals, there were very few snare drum changes in the studio. In fact, I had a few plastic heads, of course, in the beginning. Then I ended up with a calf head that for some reason, I poured milk all over, which stretched it. Somebody said milk was good. That head lasted me for years and years. It's on practically every track from '67 and '68. It actually had a hole in it, which I just stuffed chewing gum in, and it still survived.

In the '70s, when I was spending a lot of time in LA, they used to have a get-together on Sunday nights called "the Jim Keltner Fan Club," and my kit was over there one time—it was in all different studios, usually the Record Plant—and everybody would come down and just jam, including Mick [Jagger]. Anyway, Paul [McCartney] came down one night. When I got off the kit, he started playing and put a stick right through the snare head. But I'm not bitter. [laughs] Anyway, that was the end of that.

So no, I'm not one for changing skins all the time. And here in America I'm well hooked up because Jeff Chonis, my drum tech, is just the finest. I appreciate him so much, I love him, and I want to thank him because drum techs are very important.

## Tico Torres (Bon Jovi)

**Tico:** What was your favorite era with "The Group"?

**Ringo:** Well, they were all great eras, from the first album, which we did in twelve hours, because they were the songs we did in clubs and on tour, so we really knew them. And then from *Rubber Soul* to *Revolver* it evolved, you know. And The White Album [*The Beatles*]...I love that record, and *Abbey Road*. I love what used to be the B-side of *Abbey Road*, with all the short songs on it—because the boys wouldn't finish writing them. [laughs] "Polythene Pam," etc. That was when I had the maple kit, which I also used on my new record, *Choose Love*—with all the calf heads that gave it all that depth. The "Polythene Pam" set, I call it. There's a lot more tom work on those tracks than I would have done normally, just because the depth of calf is incredible.

## Carmine Appice (rock great)

**Carmine:** What mic' positioning and how many mic's were generally used on your drumkit on a typical recording in '67-'68?

**Ringo:** This is a very difficult, technical question. Just on the sideline, I was talking to George Martin last week and I was saying, "I've been sent all these questions about microphones and what make they were and what position they were." And he said, "Oh, I ripped that up. I have no idea." So, I have to go along with him.

## Rikki Rockett (Poison)

**Rikki:** Your son Zak is a great drummer in his own right. How much did you work with him one-on-one as he grew as a musician?

**Ringo:** It's really interesting with Zak, because he is a brilliant drummer—besides being a great son. And he's a very dedicated drummer. I gave him one lesson and I showed him the old boom-chick, you know. So I let him get on with that for a while. He was probably ten at the time. And then I went to give him a second lesson, "Okay, son, Daddy will give you lesson number two now. It's very hard." And I went to show him the boom, boom, bat. He said, "I can do that, Dad." I said, "Great, you're on your own." [laughs]

I really believe that if you can play the basic rhythm patterns—straight rock, shuffle, waltz, and the fills that work with them—that's what the drummer's art is all about. That's where you are *you*. That said, it's better to be you in the right place. Some drummers are trying to be too much of themselves and they just roll right over the lyrics. I've never understood that.

So, anyway, the answer to your question the long way around is, I gave Zak one lesson and then he was on his own. But he does practice all of the time—something his dad can't do—three, four hours a day.

He's always in there playing away. But that's his style, not mine.

### **Gregg Bissonette** (studio great)

**Gregg:** All the live recordings I've ever heard of The Beatles have amazing feel and groove. I know you all had a really hard time hearing each other onstage. How did you make it feel so great when it was so hard to hear the other guys?

**Ringo:** Yes, it was really difficult to hear what was going on, especially when we got to stadiums. After the count-in I would be watching John, George, or Paul's feet, or even their bottoms—I'd be watching their asses for which way they were shaking. It was like I was playing by body language, mainly. And I couldn't do any fills because if I got off the snare it just went into silence.

Everybody in the group felt, 'round about '65, that that's enough of that. Let's get in the studio and see what we can put together, and that's what we did.

### **Simon Kirke** (Bad Company)

**Simon:** What are your three favorite Beatles tracks for the drumming?

**Ringo:** Well, dear Simon, everybody knows I love "Rain." I also love "Get Back" and "Day Tripper." You know, there are just too many songs to choose from. Everybody talks about "Come Together," which is great too. And as I mentioned earlier, "Polythene Pam." "Bathroom Window" is also one of my all-time favorites.

### **Hal Blaine** (session legend)

**Hal:** When did you realize that drumming was more than a hobby for you?

**Ringo:** When I got paid. [laughs] Yes, Hal,


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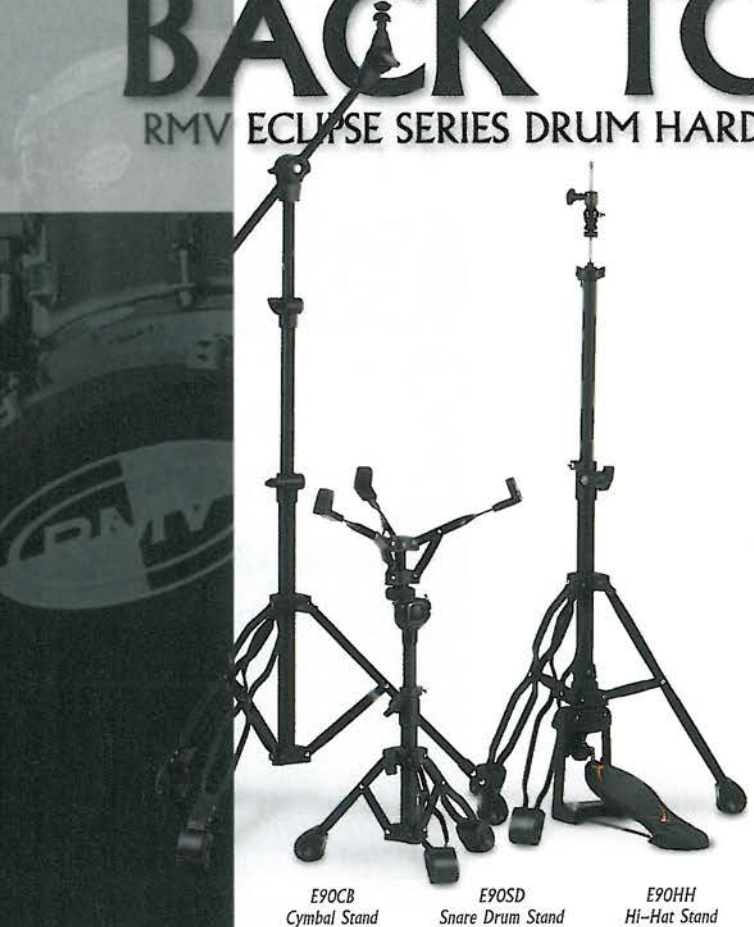

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Hudson continued from page 67

that," and it's an odd dynamic that I haven't really gotten over yet.

The same thing happened to me when I worked with Paul McCartney on *Vertical Man*. We went to Paul's house and he played bass. Everyone thinks that because they were Beatles, they don't want to know what can make them better. But they want to know as much as anyone. So Ringo will tell me, "Mark, cue me when to stop," because we record as a band—we're out there singing and playing at the same time.

On a lot of Ringo's albums that I've done, if you listen with headphones, sometimes on the quieter moments you'll hear someone yelling "A minor" or "Go to the bridge." It's all over the records, but we love it that way. This is the first time Ringo has said in print that he's starting to feel like he's actually in a band again. A lot of the other solo records he did, it was just him and studio musicians.

**MD:** How does Ringo feel about using Pro Tools?

**Mark:** Well, he was really against it at first. But now it's become such the state-of-the-art that if you don't use it, you're not making records. But he won't ever let anything be moved. He'll play the song all the way through with the band, maybe do several takes, and we might combine sections of the full performance. However, we don't go in and fix anything or move individual notes around. He's a purist that way. Ringo won't let that happen.

**MD:** Does Ringo ever talk to you about other drummers? Will he play something and say, check out the drums on this?

**Mark:** Oh, yeah. Are you kidding? He loves that. He's said that he was more inspired by Ray Charles' drummers than anybody else, ever. I don't know who they were, but he talks about those records all the time. They were a huge inspiration to him. Ringo also told me that one time he walked into the studio and watched Stevie Wonder playing the drums and he almost wanted to quit. Ringo loves how Stevie plays.

**MD:** Let's talk a bit about Roundhead drummer Gregg Bissonette.

**Mark:** Well, obviously, it's great when you have Gregg as one of The Roundheads, because Gregg can play *anything*, from Buddy Rich to you name it. He's got it down. And it's funny because he can do a clinic on Ringo's playing—he knows everything that Ringo plays.

Ringo said the greatest thing to Gregg once. He said, "Maybe you can teach me something about *me*." Isn't that great! [laughs] Gregg gets so touched by the fact that he's doing this gig, because Ringo means so much to him and has inspired him so much. Gregg and his brother Matt are a great rhythm section. Great guys. The real deal.

**MD:** What other drummers do you dig?

**Mark:** There are many. Vinnie Colaiuta is great. And Jim Keltner, he's reared in the Ringo school. I love Denny Seiwell too. Abe Laboriel Jr. is also great.

I'm real picky about my drummers. I've worked with so many, but you've got to get guys who have feel and taste—and Ringo is the king of all of it. Out of everybody I've worked with, Ringo's the one who knows how to play a song. He does it better than anyone. And I've never seen or known another drummer to have such great positioning of how to hit a snare.

**MD:** Can you explain?

**Mark:** He's actually sat and taught me this, where he'll go, "I'll do the verse like this," and he plays a beat and I just watch where he's hitting the snare, and he doesn't change his position. The whole verse lays on that exact spot. Then he'll do a drum fill into the chorus, and *then* he changes position on the snare, where it cracks a bit more. It's unbelievable! That's knowing your instrument.

Everyone thinks they have to learn the beat, but that's not just it. You have to learn the *sound*. And Ringo is a light player. He told me that John Bonham was also a light-touch guy. And usually the light-touch guys get more sound out of the drum; the tone is different. And that's where Ringo lies—right in the middle of the sound.

I watch Ringo play those drum fills,

continued on the bottom of page 73

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## Ringo Starr

when I got that first little paycheck of ten English shillings—about a dollar and a half. [laughs]

**Hal:** Did you ever receive the monster set that I designed for Ludwig, and was purchased for you by George?

**Ringo:** I did receive that monster kit that George got for me, thank you. And with that kit, I don't know, it seemed like a hundred drums, but there were probably only twelve—the big Hal Blaine multi-tom kit. We set it up in the studio and I intended on using them. But when I went to do a fill, I looked at all of those drums and was so confused because I didn't know which one to hit. And by that time the fill was over, so I had to take them down again. [laughs] But thanks, anyway.

### Mickey Curry (Bryan Adams)

**Mickey:** Are there any recordings of you playing skiffle music [before The Beatles]?

**Ringo:** No, more's the pity. I'd love to hear some of that now. There was a record we made in Germany with Rory Storm, but in the hustle and bustle of life I lost my copy. If anybody's got it out there.... We did "Mailman Bring Me No More Blues," a Buddy Holly thing, and "Fever." I'd like a copy of that.

**Mickey:** Also, did you ever study with anyone?

**Ringo:** I didn't, actually. My mother met some man in a pub who was in a band and she said to me, "Oh, go down, Bobby will give you a lesson," or whatever his name was. So I went down and he was actually in one of those marching bands, the huge bass drum player. [laughs] So that was the last time I took her advice. [laughs]

**Mickey:** Was there anyone you tried to emulate?

**Ringo:** No, not really. I just wanted to play. I do recall, as a teenager, having heated discussions with other drummers who were sort of veering into jazz. I just loved rock 'n' roll, so I wanted to keep it rock 'n' roll.

### Dino Danelli (The Rascals)

**Dino:** What were your three most memorable experiences as a Beatle?

**Ringo:** John, George, and Paul.

### Dennis Chambers (Santana)

**Dennis:** Did you ever have an embarrassing moment on stage or in the studio?

**Ringo:** On stage it was embarrassing when you fell off the riser, which I did. As you know I used to have a big, high one. [laughs] And then there was one of those occasions when The Beatles were touring America—and we were just so excited. We'd been up three days and nights, and we got to this city, which I won't name, and Paul did the count in: "One, two, three, four..." and I came in like a snail. I couldn't go any faster, thank you. [laughs]

## Vinnie Colaiuta (drumming great)

**Vinnie:** How involved were you in those amazing drum sounds, including some of the classic compression?

**Ringo:** Once we found compression, we put it everywhere. The cymbals were great compressed. As far as the drum sounds, I would go down to the studio and bang the drums, and George Martin, or the other boys, would be in the studio listening. I would then come in and just tweak it my way. So that's about it, really.

**Vinnie:** Do you realize how much you've influenced drumming, in areas like time, feel, and fills, and in creating that style and musical approach? Was it just the result of "being you" and being inside the music, or was it heavily influenced by other factors?

**Ringo:** I think it was just me being me. You know, I knew no better how it worked. I did what I did and that's all I can ever say. It's a gift that God gave me and I'm grateful for it to this day.

## Kenny Aronoff (session great)

**Kenny:** What influenced you to come up with one of the coolest beats ever, in the song "In My Life"?

**Ringo:** I think it was sort of me trying to do the hi-hat drum pattern on "Anna." I don't know anymore...it's a feeling in what's left of my brain that it was that.

**Kenny:** What music or musical styles were you listening to and/or playing before rock 'n' roll drumming became your full-time job?

**Ringo:** Big band, traditional jazz, skiffle of course, early rock 'n' roll, blues, country & western—all music. I love music. But I was a huge fan of country music, the blues, and rock 'n' roll—Elvis. I mean, I came in with Bill Haley. *That* was great. But alongside that, of course, there was Johnny Ray and Frankie Lane and all those other guys. By the way, I think you're more than just a session-player myself. I've seen you live. You're great!

## Clem Burke (Blondie)

**Clem:** Is it true you're left-handed? If so, do you think playing the kit right-handed has contributed to the uniqueness of your playing?

**Ringo:** Absolutely. I was born left-handed, but my grandmother felt right-handed would be better, so she tried to change me over. It's really weird because I write with my right hand, or if I'm cutting anything I use my right hand, but if I'm playing golf, cricket, or throwing bricks

continued from page 71

and because he's left-handed, he leads with the left. Not too many people know he's a lefty. That made some of his drum fills sound like no one else's.

**MD:** What's the worst thing a drummer can do on a session?

**Mark:** I don't like a hot dog drummer. A drummer who overplays is death. Drummers have almost gotten too good at their craft. They sit down and do all of their best stuff all of the time.

The best thing that a drummer can do is just lay down the beat. That's all you've got to do. If you lay down the groove, you're ahead of the game. And that's why, for me, I'll take Ringo, Jim Keltner, and someone like Vinnie Colaiuta—who can really play when he needs to, but also knows how to hold it down. And it's those guys—the Steve Gadds and the Gregg Bissonettes—that play what a drummer should play. As a producer, I won't hire you if you overplay. I can't spend my entire tracking date telling the drummer to shut up. [laughs]

That was the whole beauty of The Beatles. They complemented each other so well. So my advice for drummers would be, keep the beat and play the song. Whenever I ask Ringo questions about drum fills, he says, "I just play the song, and when they shut up I'll do a fill." Have an attitude like that, and you'll really do okay.

*For more with Mark Hudson and his work with Ringo, go to www.moderndrummer.com.*

**Billy Amendola**

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or darts, I'm left-handed.

A lot of my fills I feel are strange because when I come off a fill I have to get myself in a position where I start it with my left hand, which is always underneath, playing the snare of course, and the hi-hat hand is in the way. So I've got to organize myself in the blink of an eye. So absolutely I think it makes my style a little different.

**Clem:** How many takes were done on the track "Helter Skelter," and was the kit set up in a different spot than usual at the studio for that track?

**Ringo:** I don't know where you got this question from, but I have this weird feeling that the kit *was* in a different place. For "Helter Skelter," I'm thinking the drums were set up more to the left when you walked down the stairs at Abbey Road. I was usually set up sort of middle right. And I don't know...I think we did like five takes. It wasn't a lot, but I know my fingers were bleeding.

### **Paul Doucette** (Matchbox Twenty)

**Paul:** Do you work out what you're going to play on record beforehand, or do you let it flow out naturally?

**Ringo:** I always let it flow naturally. I can never work out what I'm going to play. I mean it's just not anything I can do. After the count-in, I'm off, and you get what you get.

**Paul:** How does drumming affect your songwriting, and vice versa?

**Ringo:** I never write songs, really, on the drums. It's usually on piano or guitar, so it doesn't come into play that much. Unlike the great Robert Palmer. He wrote sitting behind the kit, which always amazed me. But I've never sat behind a kit and wrote a song. I always have to have a few chords going. God bless Robert Palmer.

## Bissonette's Bliss
### Gregg's Drum Lesson With Ringo

Gregg Bissonette needs no introduction to long-time *MD* readers. And whether you're an old fan or new, treat yourself to his latest DVD, *Musical Drumming In Different Styles* [Hudson Music] and the recently released Ringo & The Roundheads live DVD. Both will give you an understanding and appreciation for why, over the past twenty-plus years, Gregg's been tagged as one of the most respected and well-liked drummers in the business.

Throughout Gregg's childhood and to this day, Ringo Starr and The Beatles have been a major inspiration in his life. He's the first to admit that working with Ringo is a dream come true. With that in mind, *MD* asked Gregg if he would share one of his recent moments with the great one.

"It's an incredible thrill to be right in the middle of my second Ringo & The Roundheads tour for Ringo's latest CD, *Choose Love*," Gregg says. "I can't believe I get to play drums for the drummer I've listened to and loved the most my entire life. Words cannot express the joy of also getting to play double drums with him on many of the songs in the show.

"Ringo has the most amazing natural swing to his feel, and his playing is always perfect for the song. When The Roundheads were learning "Long Tall Sally" for the show, I asked Ringo, 'How in the world did you do that incredible-sounding aggressive triplet groove towards the end? I hear kick, snare, cymbals, and toms all at the same time!' Ringo happily sat down on his kit and proceeded to give me the greatest drum lesson of my life!

"Here's the fill: Because Ringo is left-handed, he leads with his left crash and kick on beat 1, then floor tom right, snare left, right crash-ride and kick on 2, then snare left, and floor tom right—and repeat to your heart's content. What an honor! Thanks, Ringo!"

*For more on what Gregg is up to, check out his Web site, www.greggbissonette.com.*

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## Chad Smith
(Red Hot Chili Peppers)

**Chad:** Why does every single Beatles track feel great?

**Ringo:** Because I'm on it. [laughs]

**Chad:** Are there any drum feels that are more difficult for you than others? If so, why?

**Ringo:** The shuffle—I always have difficulty with it. I love to play the shuffle and it's really cool, but I don't ever want to come off the shuffle to do a fill or anything else. I just want to shuffle from start to finish because it just keeps driving it really well. You're shuffling away and it's like, here comes a chorus, and you want to fill to bring it in, but then you've got to get that train going again afterwards. So the shuffle can be tricky.

## Liberty DeVitto (Billy Joel)

**Liberty:** Do you think your lack of rudimental knowledge and the fact that necessity is the mother of invention led you to become the definition of what is the ultimate songwriter's drummer?

**Ringo:** Well, I think I became the ultimate songwriter's drummer because even in my early days I played to the song. And, of course, with writers like Lennon and McCartney, I had great songs to play. So you just knew where you wanted to lift it, keep it straight, or lower it a bit.

I still play on that principle. I don't want to get in the way of the song. It's been mentioned before that I am a songwriter's drummer, and I think it's because of this principle: if the singer is singing, let's listen to him or her.

**Liberty:** Were the fills spontaneous in songs like "With A Little Help From My Friends," the two-bar drum intro on "Hey Jude," and "Rain," or did a lot of thought go into what you played?

**Ringo:** They were spontaneous performances. All my fills are spontaneous. I cannot work them out, I can't. I don't know how I get to the start. It's just a magic moment. I used to say all my fills are in blackout. [laughs]

As I said earlier, I believe that the drummer's art is in the fills. A good lesson for any new drummer out there is, *no* fill is just as important as a big fill. Holes are really emotional. Going back to Zak, when he first started, he felt he had to hit every drum. And I just had to mention, because he's my son, "You don't have to hit them all right after the count-in, son." [laughs] But he's better now. [laughs]

## Ned Brower (Rooney)

**Ned:** How would you sum up the changes in your sound preferences over the course of your career?

**Ringo:** Well, I think if you listen to my drums, besides the dampening from the '60s, we don't have them quite so dampened anymore. I still like a lot of snare sound coming from the snare, and depth from the toms.

**Ned:** Do you ever use your vintage equipment, or do you stick to using modern gear?

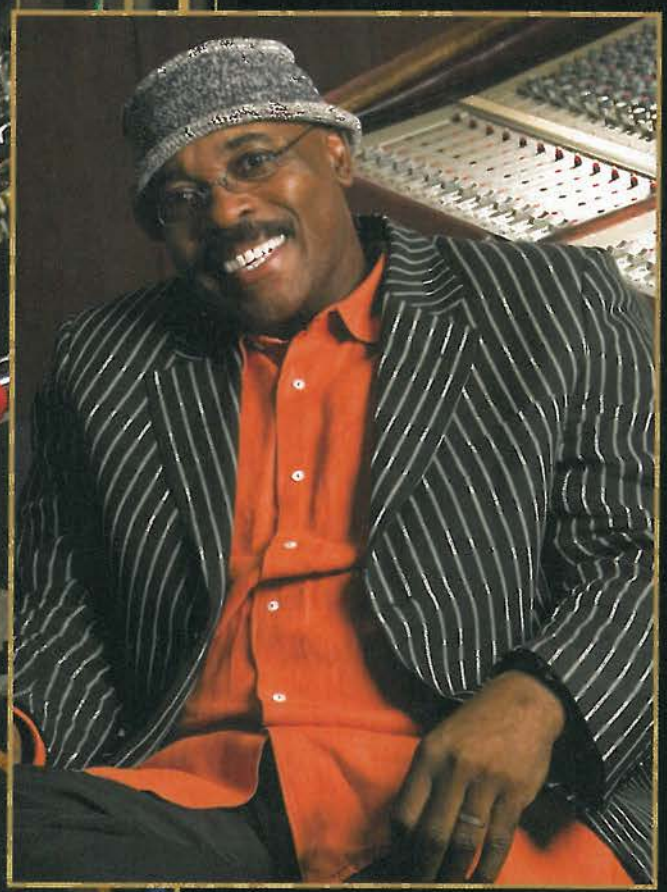
**Ringo:** This is a great question because, like I said earlier, on *Choose Love*, I brought out of retirement the maple kit I was talking about before with the calf heads. Of course, I had *new* calf heads on them. So you might notice there's more depth in the toms and the bass drum. It was just a real thrill to play them again. I recommend calf heads to all drummers for their sessions. I hope they blow your mind the way they do mine. It's just incredible. But don't forget…I am a vegetarian.

*For more on what Ringo's up to, check out www.ringostarr.com. (A very special thank you to Ringo's publicist, Elizabeth Freund, for helping put this story together.)*

# harvey mason

## change is good

he's achieved the respect of both his peers and the public. He's played with everyone from Sinatra to Seal, and from Notorious BIG to Fourplay (his own band with Nathan East, Bob James and Larry Carlton). So when everything's good, why change anything? "Because sometimes change is good," replies drumming legend Harvey Mason explaining his move to TAMA's new Starclassic Bubinga Omni-Tune drums. "And I felt it was time for a change. For some time I wanted a newer, fresher sound and new energy. Then one day I was at Drum Paradise, where I keep my drums. They were going over the new Omni-Tunes. I heard the drums and I kind of fell in love." But Harvey didn't simply change right then and there. "I tried them for over a year before I made the commitment. I visited the TAMA factory. I saw how the drums were made, which was amazing. I conferred with TAMA's R&D department and saw how eager they were to treat things differently and create new products. And finally, the combination of the bubinga shells and the tuning system made making a change very easy and very natural."



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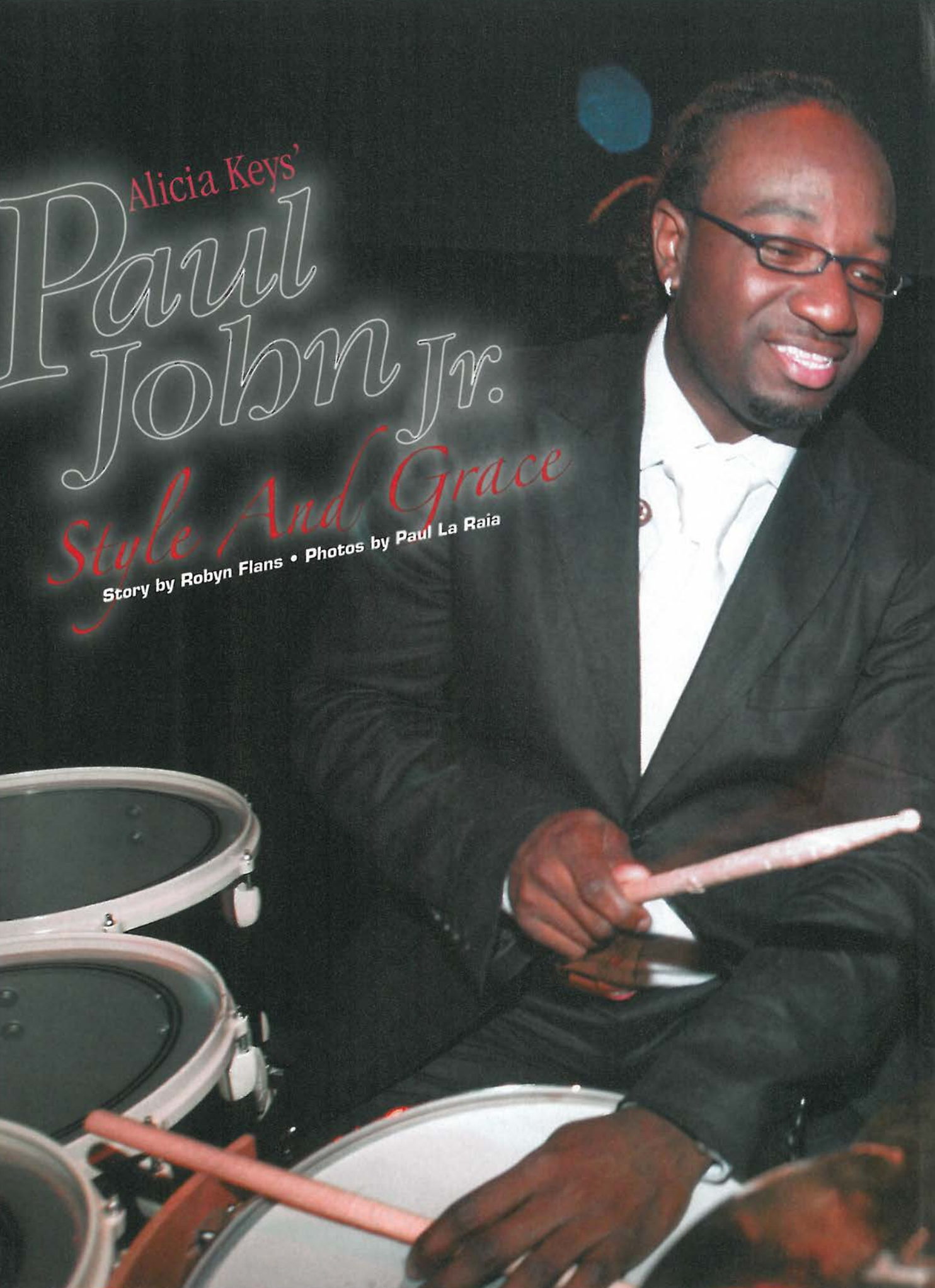
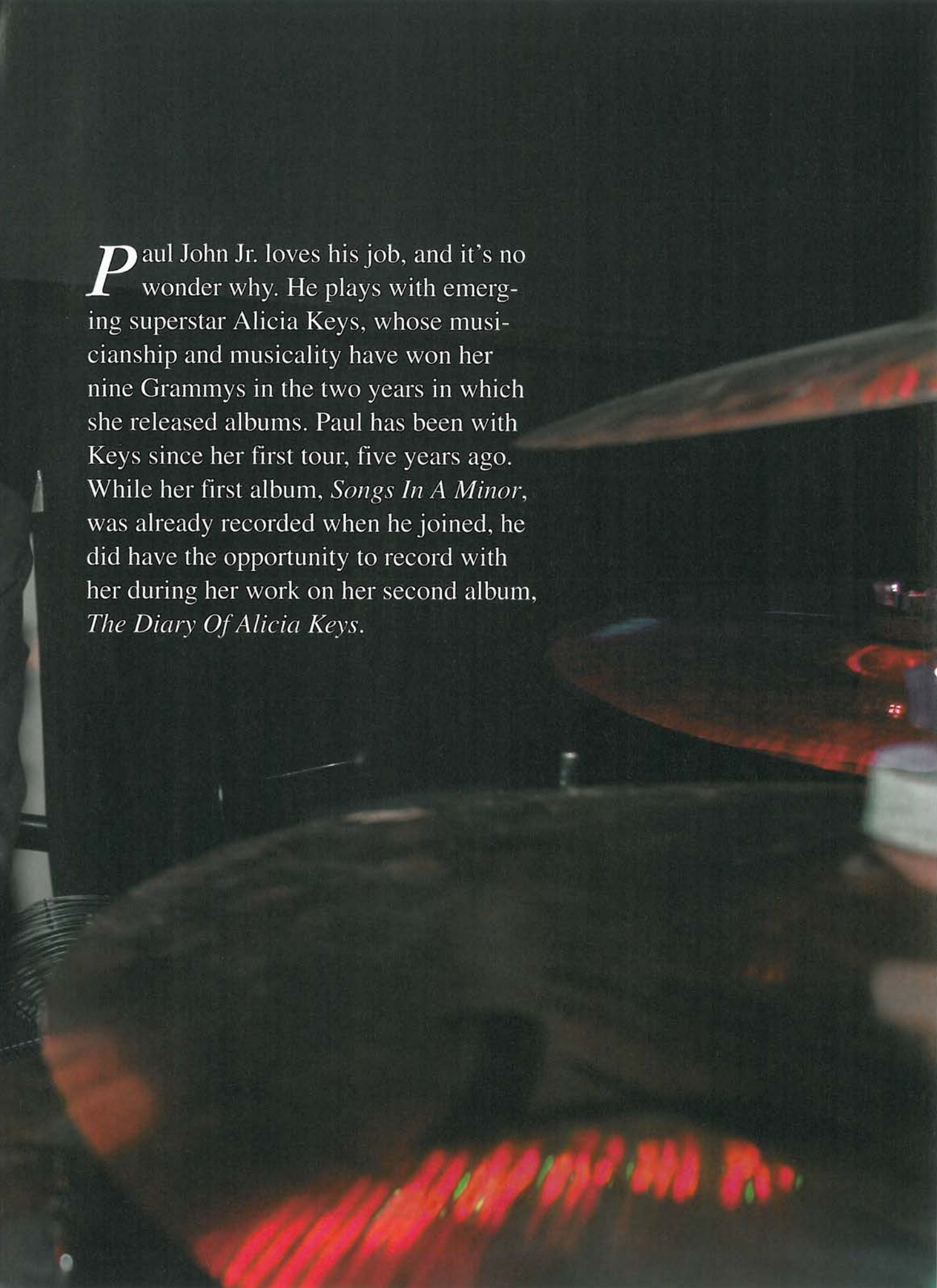


# Alicia Keys' Paul John Jr.

## Style And Grace

Story by Robyn Flans • Photos by Paul La Raia



Paul John Jr. loves his job, and it's no wonder why. He plays with emerging superstar Alicia Keys, whose musicianship and musicality have won her nine Grammys in the two years in which she released albums. Paul has been with Keys since her first tour, five years ago. While her first album, *Songs In A Minor*, was already recorded when he joined, he did have the opportunity to record with her during her work on her second album, *The Diary Of Alicia Keys*.

When you have a gig with someone like Keys, you have to be prepared for anything. Paul's musical beginnings were in the church, and while a lot of his study was informal, he took his instrument very seriously and set his goals high. At twenty-seven, the Queens, New York resident feels as though he's found a home—and what a wonderful home it is.

**MD:** When you have to re-create that first album live, how do you approach it?

**Paul:** I don't listen to the album at all. I go off of what we do in rehearsals, because sometimes Alicia doesn't want it the way the album is. She might want the little key things you're used to hearing. But overall, she gives us a whole lot of room to create. What she does in the studio is in the studio, and what she does live is live.

**MD:** That first album is so programmed. Do you use a lot of electronics and sampling?

**Paul:** No, I don't. We use two machines

that have a lot of the sampled signature sounds.

**MD:** Run by whom?

**Paul:** By the musical director. And sometimes we have a percussionist. When he's out with us, we don't run any of that stuff. I'm going to get more into that stuff, though, because I know the next album will probably require a lot more of it. The second album required a lot of it, but on tour, we went big band with a whole lot of jazz standards, so there was no need for all the triggering.

"Alicia will switch things up right on stage. You've really got to be *vibing* with her to know where she's going next."

**MD:** How did you approach the big band sound with your setup?

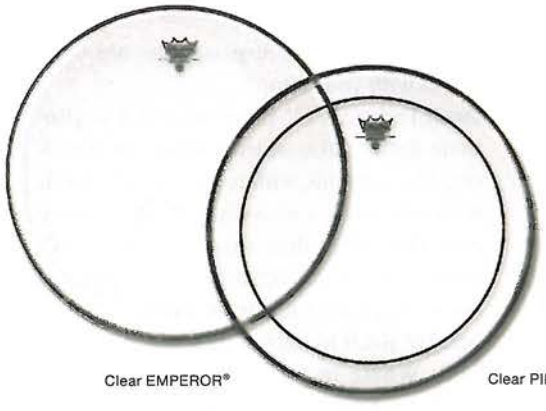
**Paul:** I added a 13" floor tom and a smaller snare drum. I also added a whole lot of colors, like cymbals with rivets. And I played with two rides, a nice dry one and a pingy one. But other than that, I didn't really change that much, because it was so mixed up—switching back from the real heavy beats of R&B to light jazz. It was great.

**MD:** Where in your background did the big band knowledge come, in addition to the more hip, contemporary approach?

**Paul:** From studying. I was enrolled in Five Towns College for one semester, studying music performance and a little bit of jazz. But most of my feel comes from growing up and playing in church. I think with all of that experience I had playing by ear, I can now listen to an album and immediately get the feel of what's being played and duplicate it.

**MD:** Did you take lessons growing up?

**Paul:** Yes, but they were a little different. I would sit down with a drummer, like Nat Townsley. I studied with him for two years, and I never touched a drumset. He would show me things and we'd talk. I studied with another drummer, Dave West, for about a year. Jeff Davis, a big Gospel drummer, and Gerald Heyward, who I go to church with, are friends. And you recently did an article on my cousin, Gorden Campbell, who I've studied all my life. So I've been around a lot of good drummers.



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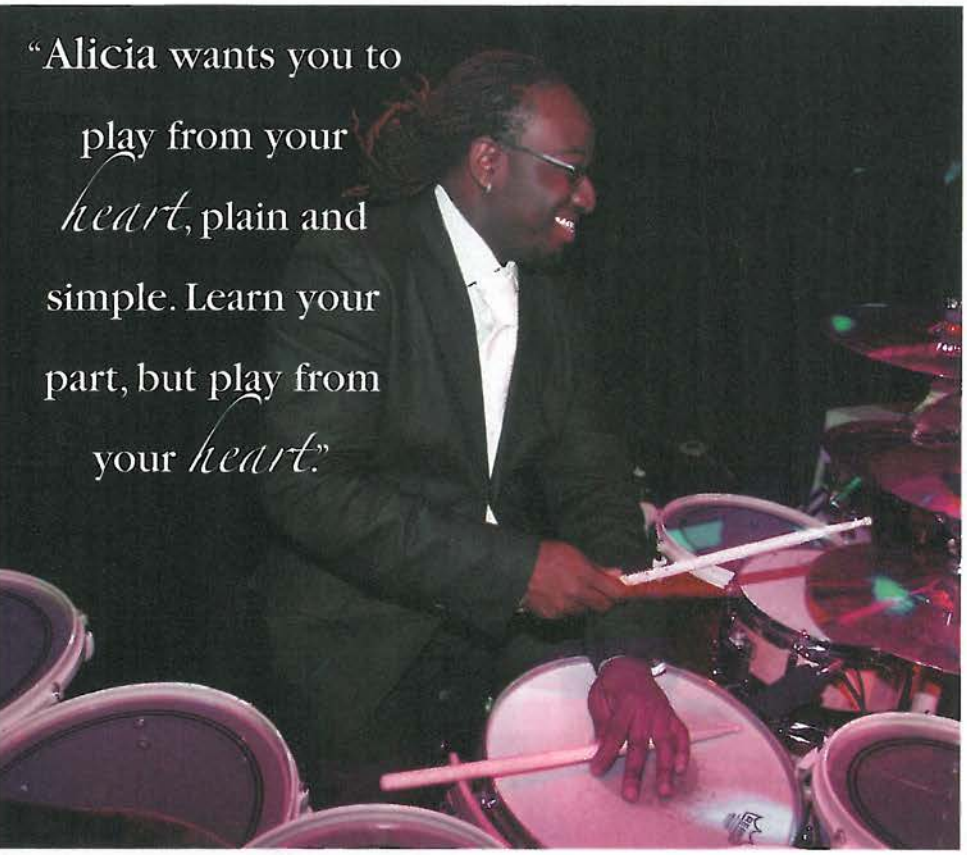
## Paul John Jr.

The way I grew up and the way I play is basically about hearing what is going on, mimicking it, and then taking it a step further, studying that genre of music. Like with the recent Alicia tour, when I found out it was going to be about big band playing, I had to adjust my mind, because when you're playing R&B music, there's not a whole lot of room to express yourself. You've got to pretty much play in the pocket and lay it down. But being that we were doing all this jazz stuff, I had to push my mind over and say, "It's okay for me to experiment on this part, kind of swing it out real hard, and throw something in there, as long as it's tasteful."




**MD:** What did you actually do to prepare for that?

**Paul:** I started listening to a lot of jazz. One of my favorite groups is The Yellowjackets, when Will Kennedy was on the drums. I started getting into the whole jazz and big band thing and just became familiar with the vocabulary.

Live with Alicia, we play all kinds of music. Even when it's straight R&B, we add a lot of cover tunes and old stuff, because she's a musician who was exposed to all that kind of stuff. So we always have to watch our P's & Q's with her. What we do in rehearsal with her sometimes doesn't happen on stage. She'll switch things up right on stage. You've really got to be vibing with her to know where she's going next. We have three to five different endings to every song.

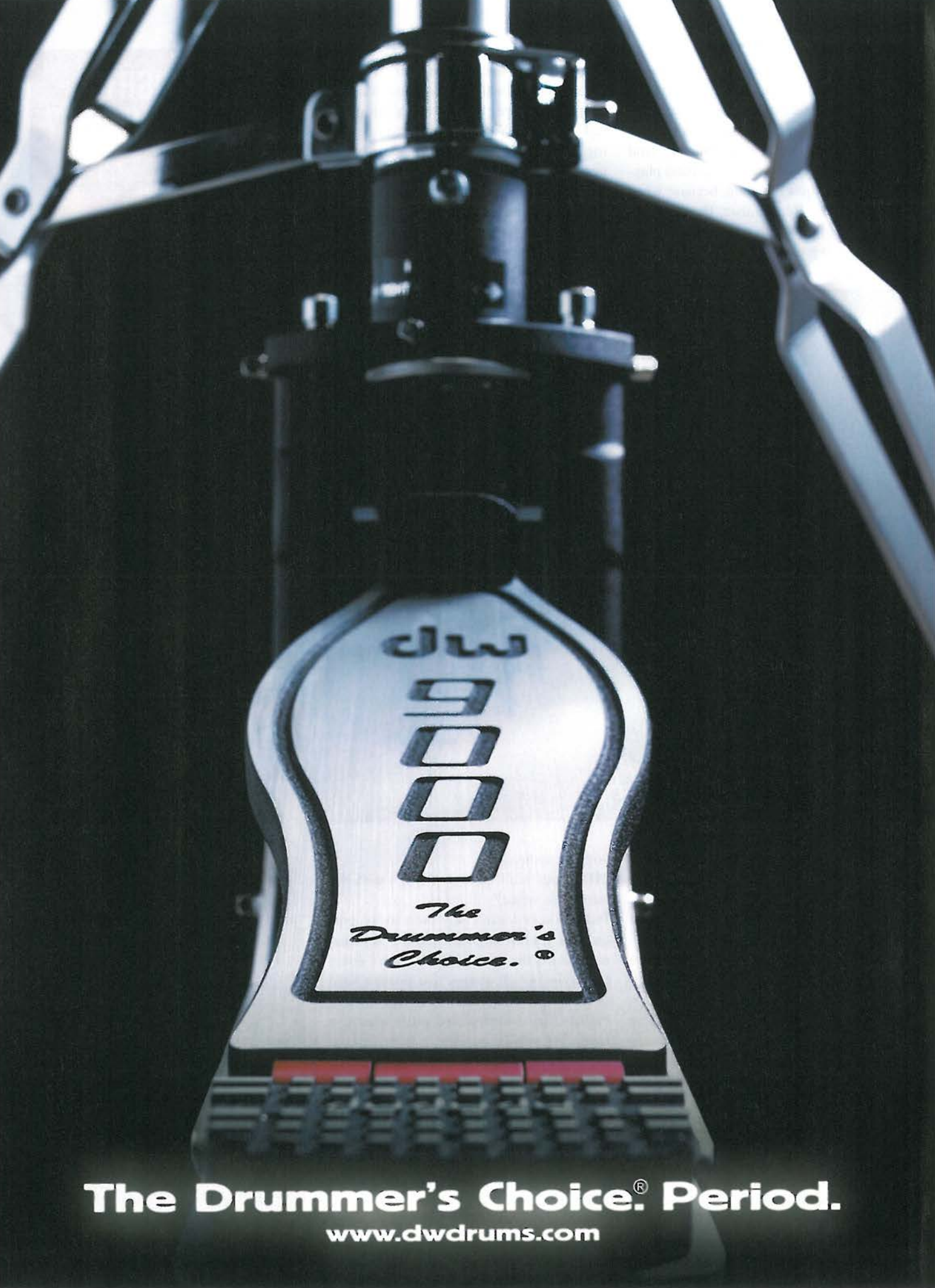
**MD:** Have the venues changed?

**Paul:** We've done arena tours, but Alicia likes smaller, more intimate places, like when we do theaters. She likes to connect with the audience.

**MD:** Does a lot have to change with the size of the venue?

**Paul:** Alicia doesn't rely on a lot of production gimmicks. With her, the number-one thing is the music and what she's doing and trying to get across. She doesn't have to show her breasts or wear tight-fitting clothes. She's a respected artist who also treats her musicians with respect. In fact, she's done TV shows where they've said, "We can't accommodate your band. You'll have to use our house band." And Alicia said, "Well, if I can't bring my band, I'm not gonna do it. That's who I am. Why would I play with another band when I have my own who knows what I like?"

**MD:** How old were you when you

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started playing?

**Paul:** I was about two years old. My mother used to get real upset with me because I would bring a bunch of boxes and pans into my room, sit on the floor, and just bang away. I made such a mess of everything. By the time I got to age four and was able to reach the pedals and actually sit on a drumset, I was banging away in church. When I turned thirteen, I decided I was going to make drumming my career and I was going to be a musician.

**MD:** When you made that decision, what changed? What did you do?

**Paul:** What changed was a lot of communication with my parents. In order to do the job, it requires a lot of staying out late, going places that you've never been before, and being around people you've never hung out with before. So there was a whole lot of respect that had to happen for and from my parents. I was still in high school and I was running around doing all this, but I still had to respect my parents' rules. But they've been a big support in everything I've done.

What also changed was my attitude toward the music. I became very serious about it. If it wasn't flowing the way it was supposed to flow, I would get upset. I was very hard on myself. Being a good drummer, you have to be critical, because I didn't just want to be a good Gospel drummer or a good R&B drummer. I wanted to be a good all-around drummer. I wanted to be able to play anything if I got the call.

**MD:** I understand you liked using instructional videos. Whose did you watch?

**Paul:** When I was about thirteen, I watched Dave Weckl's *Back To Basics*. That tape takes you through everything, from setting up the drums to how to tune the drums, and even the way you want to look when you play. I worked on all that stuff. I would set up three mirrors in my room and watch the way I looked when I played.

There's a certain way you want to look when you're doing a show. You want to give the audience a show. You have to look like you're into what you're doing. I listened to a lot of music, watched a lot of videotapes, and studied a lot of music. I did a lot of what we called "sheds," which was where a whole bunch of drummers in the area would get together to play. We would play, play, play, and then we'd start working on different styles of music, different styles of playing drums. I did a lot of shedding.

I would study with those teachers I mentioned and they would take me to their club gigs. I'd be their little roadie, helping them bring their stuff in, just to see them play and see how it's done. There was a whole lot of listening and watching. And when I went to college, I went for a semester and learned a whole lot. But I ended up leaving because I needed to start working to make money.

Then I recorded David Hollister's *Ghetto Hymns*. He had just broken off from Blackstreet and was doing his own thing. He asked me to go on the road, but I turned him down because I was going to school. I got offers to do Faith, 98 Degrees—a whole bunch of stuff, all of which I turned down because I was in school. But then I had to get to work.

**MD:** What else did you get out of school?

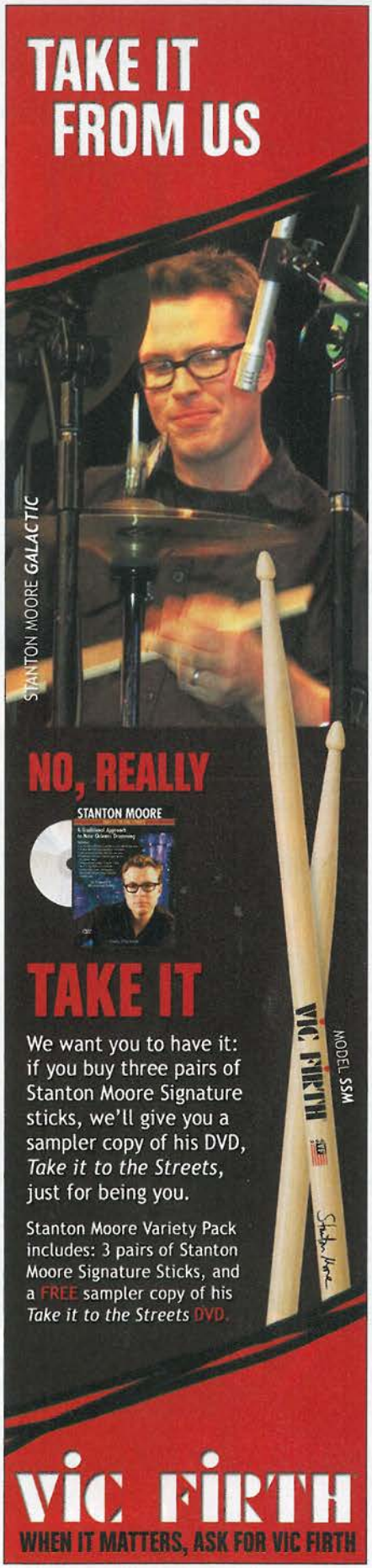
**Paul:** I wasn't just taking classes for drumming. I was taking voice lessons and I was in the studio, learning how to work the board. I was doing everything they would allow me to do, so I learned a lot. I learned about other musicians and what their instruments are about, and that helped me a lot, because I started applying that to my playing.

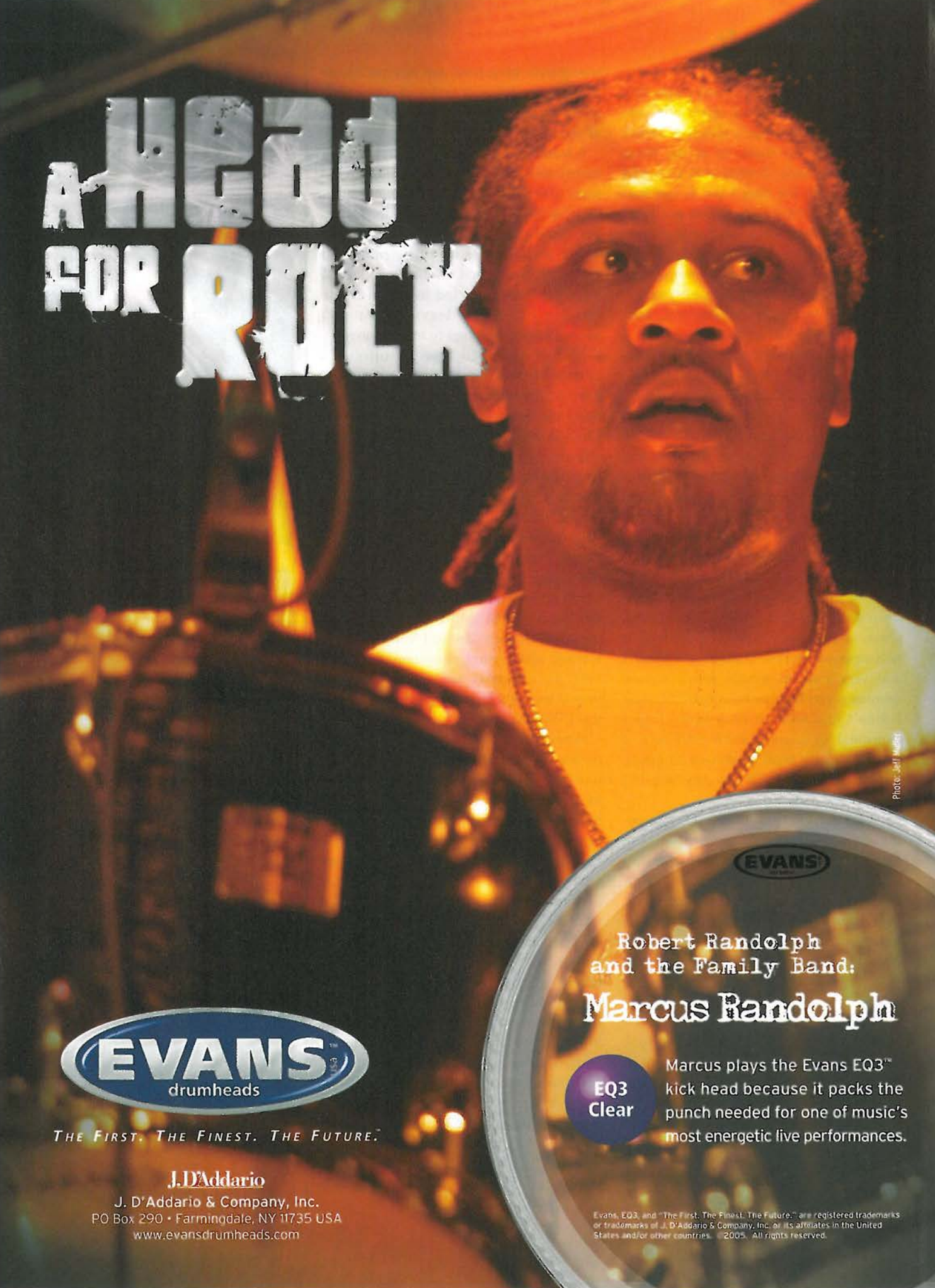
When I play, I feel it's important to take on the job of a drummer, which is to keep time and lay a foundation for the rest of the musicians. But I also go beyond that by, for instance, focusing on what the saxophonist is playing. If he's playing a beautiful line, I try to play a beautiful line on my cymbals. I try to mimic other instruments in my playing. I feel that's what makes you an expressive drummer.

When I started playing more R&B music, that was a heavy transition for me because R&B is very repetitious. I almost got a little bored with it. But I thought, I have to come up with a way to play this music the way they want, but also liven it up so I can have my own voice.

**MD:** So how did you accomplish that?

**Paul:** I started applying what I'd do in church, slipping little things in. I started experimenting. I started pushing the envelope and I got a little flack for it. But I'm finding that this approach is working with Alicia now.

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## Paul John Jr.

When I first started with her, it took a long time for her to trust me. When you're playing with other musicians, you have to trust them. If they go left and the whole band goes right, you've got to trust they can meet back together. It took Alicia a while to get used to me, but now she's used to my sound. I know what she wants and I know how to give it to her.

**MD:** What does she want?

**Paul:** She wants you to play from your heart, plain and simple. Learn your part, but play from your heart. Even though there's a lot of programming and all that stuff going on these days, she requires you to play from your heart because that's what she does. When she sits at that piano, it's all good, mistakes and all. Just go for it. Don't hold back. That's her whole thing. Playing with her for five years, I have learned a lot from Ms. Keys, a whole lot. It's really been a beautiful thing playing with her.

**MD:** How did you get the gig in the first place?

**Paul:** I worked with her before on other projects. I did Kelly Price's first TV performance, which was when I was about nineteen. The MD, Onree Gill, had called me to be on the gig, but I didn't want to go on the road. I actually turned gigs down two other times. When they called me the third time, to play with Alicia, I thought, it's Onree Gill and it's a favor to him—and I needed to work.

**MD:** Had Alicia already done her first album?

**Paul:** Yes, it was already done. I came in, and there wasn't even an audition. I learned the stuff, we played, she came in, she nodded her head, and that was it.

**MD:** Up until then, what had been your experiences?

**Paul:** I did David Hollister, Kelly Price, and a few other things. I was just on the grind, but I wasn't the type of drummer to stick with an artist. I was always moving on.

**MD:** Why?

**Paul:** I guess back then my attitude was, I didn't want to be held down by any one artist. If something else came along, I went with it. Alicia was the first artist who I actually made up my mind that I was going to stick with. From the first show, I thought, "I'm going to stay with her. I like her vibe." She's also one of those artists who shows loyalty to her musicians, so of course I'll show that to her. So as long as she wants me, I'm gonna be there.

**MD:** You've had a busy schedule with her.

**Paul:** When we go out, we go out for a long time. We were out for twenty months straight. Alicia works hard. She has a great business mind, she knows what she wants, and she knows what she's headed for.

**MD:** What do you do in your downtime between tours?

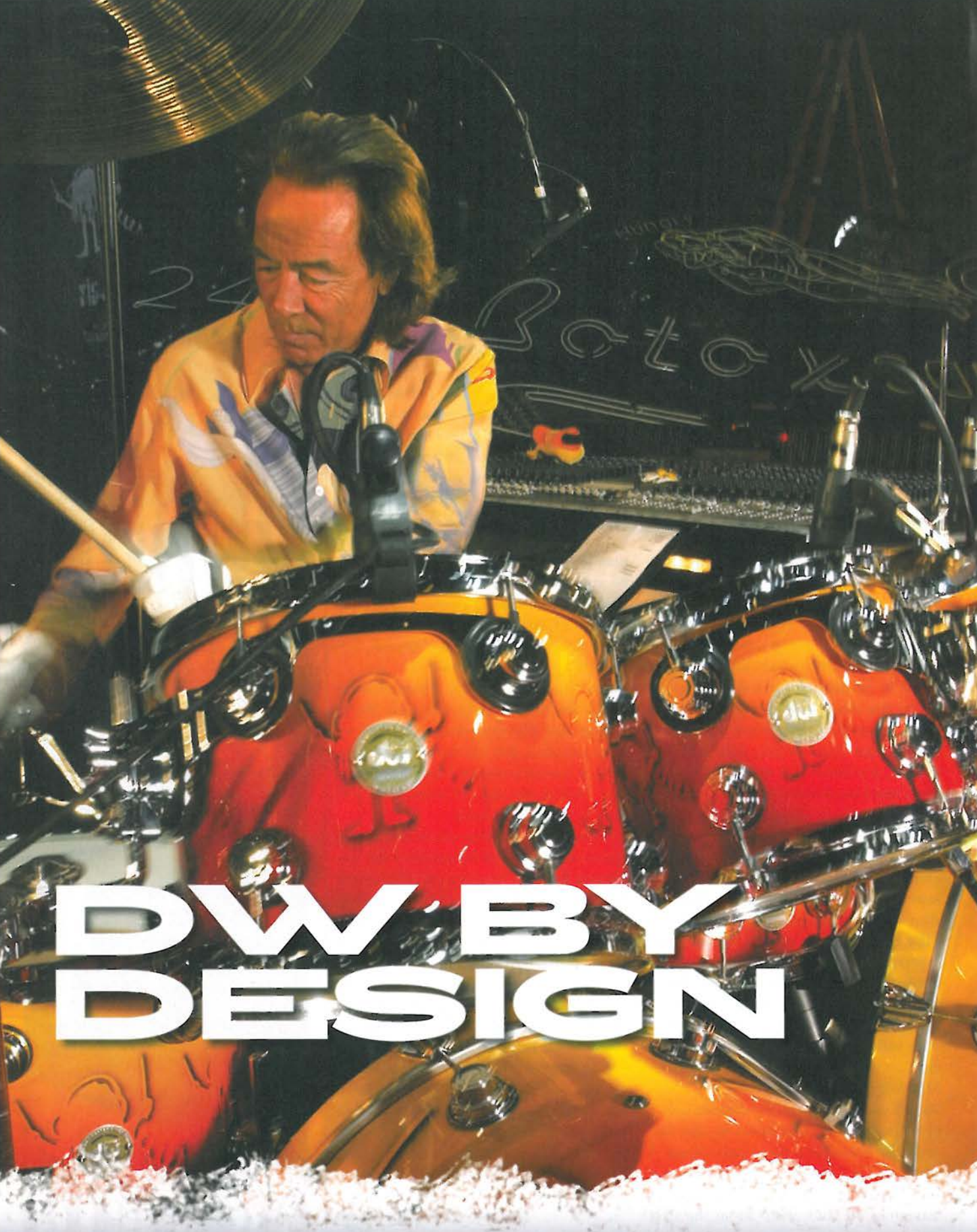
**Paul:** I'm also a producer, so I have a lot of projects that I work on at home. I'm still open to working with other artists, as long as I can fit them in around Alicia. I'm going to do work with Carl Thomas and another artist coming out on Universal, Lola. I also do a lot of work with Mike Phillips, a jazz artist. I also plan on doing my own album, which will be more Gospel-based. That's my background. I love Gospel music, I love God, and I'm a Christian.

**MD:** Is it hard maintaining Christian values when you're on the road?

**Paul:** Nobody's perfect, although some Christians tend to think they are. We're human, just like everybody else, and we make mistakes. But you have to set a standard. If you set a standard for yourself and say, This is my cut-off point, and you stick to that, it's not hard.

When I was turning down tours with certain artists, one of the reasons I did was because I knew I wasn't ready. I've seen it happen too many times, where someone has gone out before they were ready. There is so much stuff you can get caught up in, stuff you won't even know you're caught up in. I wouldn't go out there until I knew I was ready—spiritually, mentally, and until I got a little older, when I knew I could handle being out there by myself.

A lot of young musicians are anxious to get out there, but they're just not ready. There's a whole lot more to the road than just your talent and your attitude. I took my time. The music business ain't going nowhere. Take your time and know when you're ready. You'll know when it's time.



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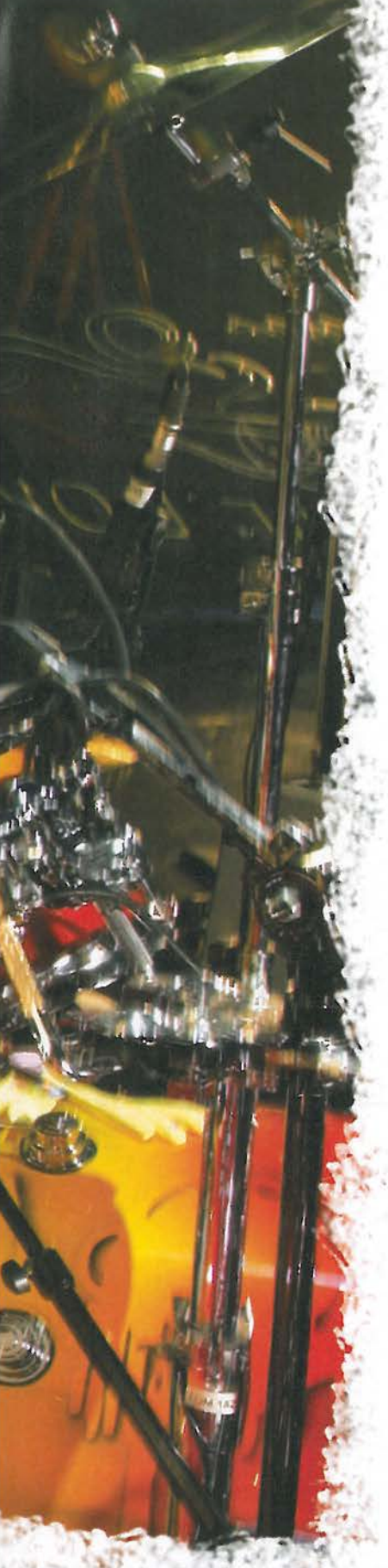

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*Artist*: Nigel Olsson (Elton John)
*Date/Time*: 2/26/05 04:39:06
*Location*: The Colloseum at Caesar's Palace, Las Vegas, Nevada. Sound check for Red Piano show.

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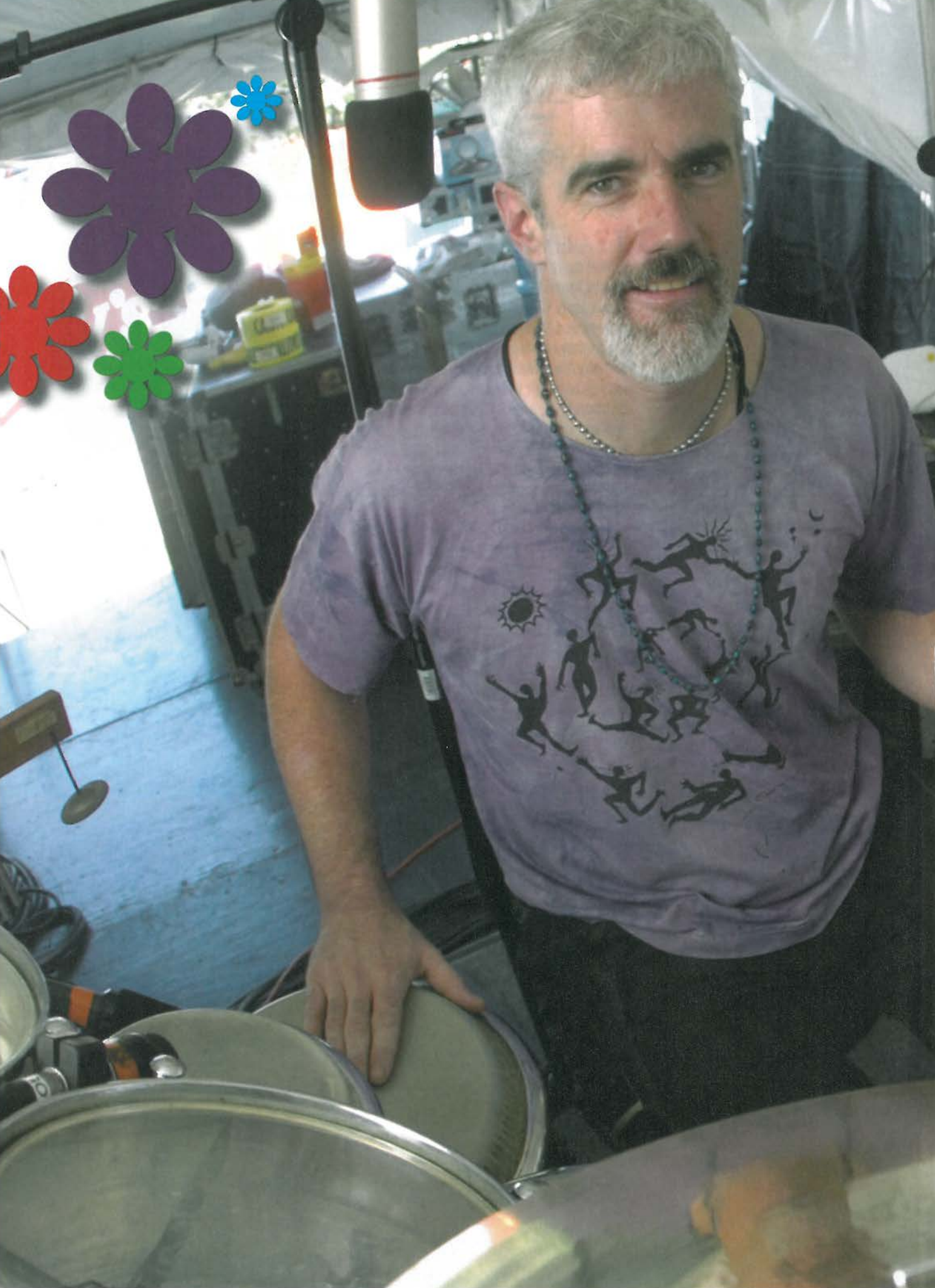
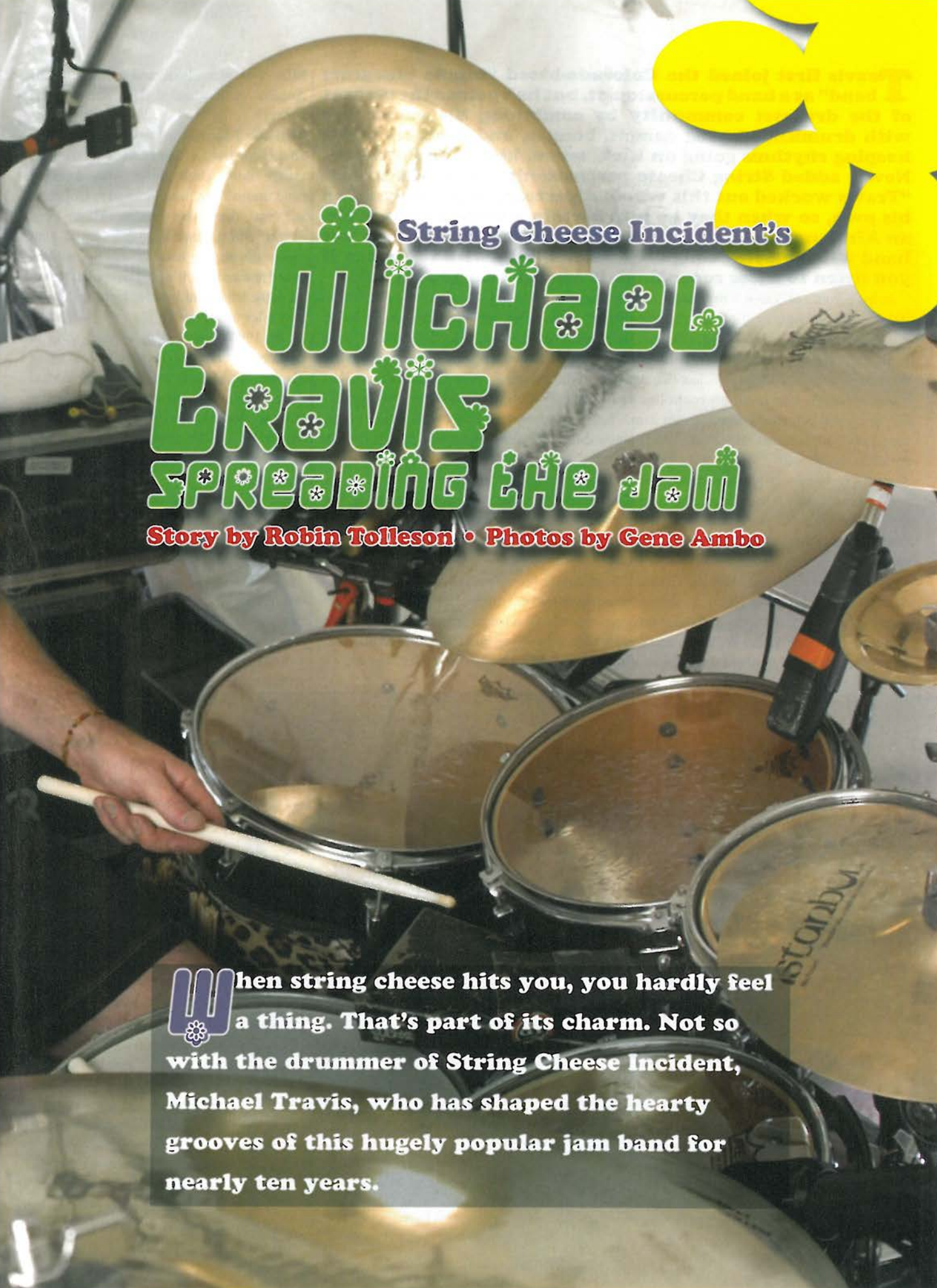




String Cheese Incident's

# Michael Travis

## Spreading the Jam

Story by Robin Tolleson • Photos by Gene Ambo

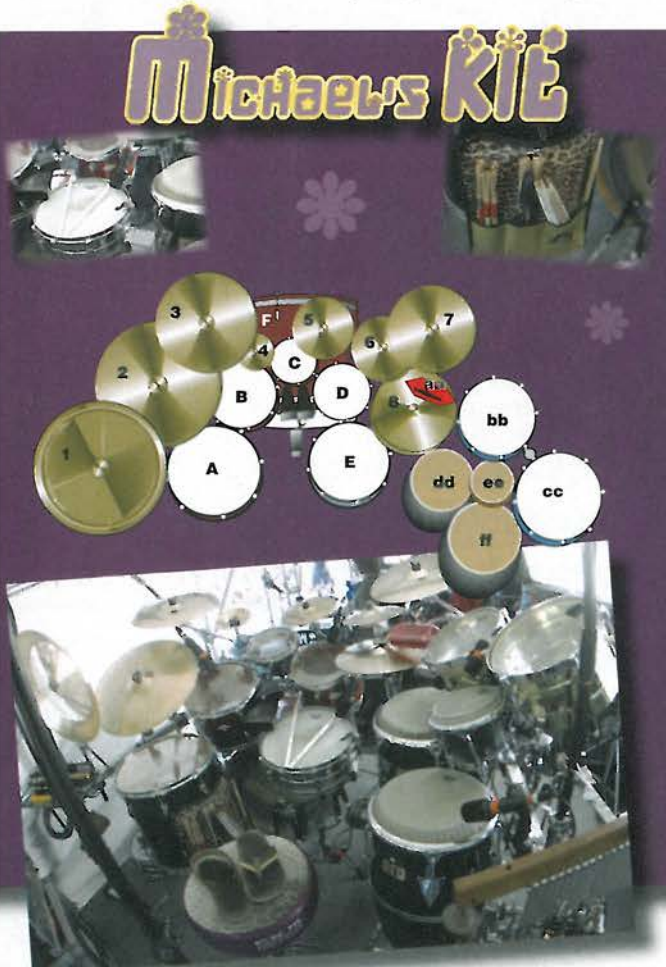
When string cheese hits you, you hardly feel a thing. That's part of its charm. Not so with the drummer of String Cheese Incident, Michael Travis, who has shaped the hearty grooves of this hugely popular jam band for nearly ten years.

**Travis first joined the Colorado-based "hippie bluegrass band" as a hand percussionist, but he's gained the respect of the drumset community by combining his percussion with drumkit, playing congas, bongos, and timbales while keeping rhythms going on kick, snare, hi-hat, and cymbals. Newly added String Cheese percussionist Jason Hann says, "Travis worked out this whole repertoire with the band on his own, so when they go into certain styles—a Latin style, an African style—he's able to play parts of the kit with one hand while playing congas or other things with the other. If you listen to those recordings, it sounds remarkably full."**

Indeed. Some of Travis's best work can be traced to the band's live recording, *Carnival '99*. Listen to his grasp of 6/8 on "Mouna Bowa," as he solos, moving from congas to kit. There are big nods to The Meters ("Missin' Me" and a hot cover of "Hey Pocky Way"), and fresh takes on a couple of jazz standards. Travis plays Dave Brubeck's "Take Five" all the way through on bongos, and it works just like drumkit on the newgrass "Shenandoah Breakdown." Travis impresses with a perfectly controlled triplet fill near the end of the funkified "Footprints." His drum and percussion solo, "Drum Jam," features surprisingly crisp, well-placed chops, especially from someone who'd only been playing drums six years at that time. 2001's *Outside Inside* kicks off with a strong drum fill, and Travis shows good hands on hip-hop ("Joyful Sound"), Jerry-jam ("Close Your Eyes"), and reggae-Latin funk ("Search").

The new String Cheese album, *One Step Closer*, also has some very strong drumming. The first track, "Give Me The Love," sports a big, but not busy, drum sound. "When The Music's Over" features a dirty, swampy funk beat, while "The 45th Of November" stands out because of its rhythmically tuneful 6/8 versus 4/4 feel.

String Cheese Incident, like the Grateful Dead before them, has full business control of their music (SCI Fidelity label), as well as merchandising and touring. The band performed tracks from *One Step Closer* and other favorites recently on a package tour with Spearhead, Umphrey's McGee, Keller Williams, and Yonder Mountain String Band. But this is a band that tours constantly and has built up a legion of fans—especially fans of deeply felt rhythm.




**Drums:** Tribes (with 3-ply Keller shells)
**A.** 16x16 floor tom
**B.** 9x12 rack tom
**C.** 8" DW Piccolo tom
**D.** 8x10 rack tom
**E.** 5x14 Ludwig Supraphonic snare
**F.** 18x22 kick

**Cymbals:** various
**1.** 19" Zildjian K Dark China
**2.** 20" Zildjian Rock ride
**3.** 16" Zildjian A Custom crash
**4.** 6" Zil-Bel
**5.** 10" Istanbul splash
**6.** 10" stacked splashes (2)
**7.** 14" Zildjian A Custom crash
**8.** 14" Sabian Stage hi-hats

**Percussion:** various windchimes, sleigh bells, shakers, etc.
**aa.** LP Jam Block
**bb.** 10" timbale
**cc.** 12" timbale
**dd.** conga
**ee.** bongo
**ff.** quinto

**Hardware:** Tama Iron Cobra hi-hat stand, DW 9000 bass drum pedal (loose spring tension)
**Heads:** Remo coated Ambassador on snare (tuned tight), clear Emperors on tom batters with clear Ambassadors underneath (no muffling), PowerStroke 3 on kick with 3" foam for muffling
**Sticks:** Vic Firth Buddy Rich model

**MD:** You were born and raised in Los Angeles and attended UC Santa Cruz, correct?

**Michael:** I learned to play hand drums in Santa Cruz from Arthur Hull, doing the Hull village drum circle thing. After learning hand drums from him, I moved to Colorado and was drumming around. These guys formed String Cheese, and I started with them, just playing hand drums. Six months later I realized that it would be cool to have a kit in the band, and I started learning how to play it for this project.

In 1994 I worked in a drum shop in Boulder. I got the job because I could string djembe heads—and the guys that worked there would teach me drumset. They'd say, "Oh, no, you want to open the hi-hat on the '&' of 4." And I'd come back the next day and have another lesson. The guys working there could play.

**MD:** What attracted you to hand drumming?

**Michael:** I had this friend who was very big in my life and showed me a lot of great things, and said, "Hey, this is cool." Village drumming on the hill sounded like a great thing to do. The tonalities and the rhythms were very appealing, but I'm not sure I would have gotten into it without my friend telling me to.

**MD:** So you probably never imagined you'd be playing in a successful musical group.

**Michael:** Not really. My whole college bent was for wilderness studies. I thought I'd be a ranger in Yosemite, or doing backpacking naturalist-type trips. I did the environmental studies program. It covers all aspects of appreciating the earth. I focused on botany, learning all about plants. Science illustration was my minor. But rock 'n' roll is much more fun than all of that, for sure.

**MD:** Did you have an inkling that you had good rhythm at some point?

**Michael:** Yeah, I guess so. I played piano, I learned a couple of songs from my dad. We'd sit around and make songs up on the piano a lot when I was growing up, and that got my two-handed coordination together a little

# Jason Hann
## Adding Even More Percussion To The String Cheese Sound

Percussionist Jason Hann first met Michael Travis when his Los Angeles band Zoo People shared a festival stage with String Cheese Incident in 1996. "We ended up talking and having a jam session by his bus," Hann recalls. The two kept in touch over the years. Then last summer, as Hann explains, "Travis asked me to come down and sit in for a show and see if the whole thing would work out. I asked him what I should bring for the sit-in, and he said, 'Everything.' So I brought it all down."

Now, as a full-time member of the band, Hann has found the need for all his gear and more with String Cheese. "I really get to play everything," he says, "congas, bongos, timbales, djembe, doumbek, darbouka, bodhran, all the toys, electronic percussion, a Roland Handsonic—and even a washboard. That's one thing that keeps the group fresh. We go through so many different styles—African, Latin, Celtic, some electronic, drum 'n' bass stuff, and even Brazilian music. It runs the gamut, which really keeps me on my toes when we're not on tour, to just try to keep all that stuff up to date."

### Hann's Hit List

Jason Hann plays a vast array of drum and percussion gear with String Cheese Incident. A partial list includes Toca drums, congas, bongos, doumbeks, and Pete Escovedo model timbales, plus a traditional djembe, bodhran, and talking drum, Paiste cymbals, a Gibraltar rack, Evans heads, Pro-Mark Mino Cinelu 516 model sticks, Roland, NAC, Ableton, and Behringer electronic products, and a washboard—along with plenty of Ace bandages.

Hann, who's half-Colombian, grew up in Miami, Florida and moved to the West Coast a decade ago. "In Miami, we'd hear a lot of Caribbean music, soca and reggae, along with rock 'n' roll," he says. In Miami, Hann was playing a lot of drumkit, because of his knowledge of world music styles. He's done about seventy percent of his work as a percussionist since moving to the West Coast, performing for the likes of Issac Hayes, Vinx, Loreena McKennitt, Hassan Hakmoun, Alana Davis, and Rickie Lee Jones. He also composes West African–inspired pieces for the group Rhythmsphere.

In String Cheese Incident, Hann uses his head and hands to fill in around the combination drum/percussion parts of Michael Travis. "Part of my thing coming in was that I didn't want Michael to have to change anything," Hann says. "So we'd just go over what he was playing and I'd play other parts around that. If he's playing conga and bell parts, I'm playing more timbales, or combining a guiro part with a timbale part. Or for an African thing, I might do a shaker thing with one hand, finding different sound textures that he might not be covering. It's forced me to work out some different kind of coordination things so that it feels full and bubbly."

Hann did a 2004 fall tour with String Cheese Incident and then followed the band into the studio to record *One Step Closer*. "It's real rootsy, real minimal," he says. "I think there's a shaker on every song. That's what we were feeling at the time, and everything was all about addressing how you create the vibe on the song and what it needs."

Hann is also amazed at the openness of the Colorado band's supporters. "Their fans are some of the most open I've ever met," he says. "They're psyched about bluegrass, they're psyched about Latin music, and they're psyched about electronica."

**Robin Tolleson**

bit. But getting the feet going was quite a shocker…a pain in the butt.

**MD:** There weren't a lot of examples of percussionists in bluegrass bands to learn from.

**Michael:** It was sort of new. Leftover Salmon was our biggest influence starting out. They didn't have a percussionist per se, but they would jump from bluegrass to calypso to Cajun-flavored themes. I was friends with the bandmembers, and their mandolin player couldn't make their first

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gig. I had just gotten back into town, and they all knew me, so they said, "Hey, you should play the gig." So it was a merger, but it wasn't like a shocking thing or anything weird, like, "Whoa, bongos on bluegrass? No way, dude." It was hippie mountain bluegrass. If we were down in the South it might have raised a few eyebrows. It just seemed like the thing to do.

**MD:** Who influenced you when you were learning to play drumkit?

**Michael:** Dave Weckl comes to mind. He gets dissed for being so clean, but I love that clean style, like his work on Michel Camilo's albums. Now the person who really influences me a lot, as far as Americana stuff, would be Jim Keltner. His feel is great. As far as peers, I really appreciate solo-free music. That's what we try to do in the side project I'm a part of, Zilla. Nobody takes a solo all night. It's just melody and themes, trying to play like an album's continuity.

As far as my peers, I love Adam Deitch, Zach Velmer, and John Staten, the guy who's playing with Karl Denson now. As far as other music I listen to, I like down-tempo electronica. That's all I have going at my house these days. It's been a long time since I've actually listened to other drummers. It's all just computer guys and programmers right now.

**MD:** Do you think drummers are starting to play more like computers, just because we're hearing so much of it?

**Michael:** Maybe. I know it's totally transformed my style. Instead of some big rock 'n' roll fill at the end of a phrase, I'll just stop playing for a measure. It has just as much impact if not more, really, than going

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duga-duga-duga-duga-crash. Yeah, the mute button is big for computer artists.

I love the discipline. They can actually make a guitar player play only four notes over the course of four measures and not do anything else. That's such an exciting development. I'm totally influenced by the whole computer thing.

Whoever programs the beats for Thievery Corporation, Kruder & Dorfmeister, and Shpongle are some of my biggest influences drumming-wise, for sure. Check out Shpongle's *Tales Of The Inexpressable* and Kruder & Dorfmeister's *DJ Kicks*. Bill Frisell always makes it onto my listening list, too, especially his *Gone, Just Like A Train*, which features Keltner.

**MD:** When you play your percussion stuff, you're also playing your feet on the hi-hat and kick. Did that present a different problem than just playing drumkit?

**Michael:** Yeah, it did. But I was a percussionist first, and then said, "I want to play drumkit and add it onto all of this." So from the first moment, I started putting congas next to me and trying to work up that dual thing. At first it was just "boom chick boom chick," with the hands doing whatever they could. I still do that a lot. [laughs]

Eventually I developed cowbell patterns with the other hand, or trying to emulate some of the more classic styles with more involved foot patterns. Getting a clean cha-cha going with different cowbell patterns was a challenge. I was just watching a Horacio Hernandez/Giovanni Hidalgo video, and seeing how clean Horacio can get that real stylized, very Cuban rumba clave was inspiring. I saw him live with Michel Camilo too—amazing.

**MD:** How does the band dynamic work as far as writing songs goes in String Cheese?

**Michael:** It's changed somewhat. Originally people would bring in songs and everybody would just have at 'em, tearing them apart and rearranging them. Now someone will bring in a song and it stays that song. I think it's kind of laziness in some ways.

I've got these side projects going, so I'm realizing how difficult it is to have a band where everyone wants to do the same kind of music. With String Cheese, its detriment and its glory is that there are six totally different personalities wanting to see totally different things out of the band, so it's a constant struggle and push and pull. When it actually flies, when you can get it together, it's kind of like the United Nations or something. But when it's not, it's such a pain. There are such opposite spectrums.

It's funny to me. When we do our side projects, we go in our own directions. Billy Nershi does an acoustic duet with his wife, and I do live electronica with computers onstage, with trancey sound effects and samplers. Our side projects are where we go to satisfy our main core. Then we try to pull all of that together for String Cheese. That's very rewarding, too.

**MD:** It may be that people are bringing in more fully formed tunes now because they're more musically evolved.

**Michael:** Yeah, the tunes are better, so they don't need as much sculpting. And everybody's like, "Okay, we'll try to represent what you want to do in this song, without the need to push and pull it and rework it to make it be more what someone else wants to hear." But in some ways that's bad, because the struggle that we went through on some of those early songs kind of defined the band. The creative process can be painful. But we still dig in occasionally and really rip into stuff.

**MD:** Are all of the different personalities part of what your fans like about the band?

**Michael:** I think so. We're our own smorgasbord, because you don't know what you're going to get with each song. We take very sweet acoustic elements and mash them with big gnarly electronic effects.

**MD:** You've written for the last couple of CDs.

**Michael:** Writing songs is like pulling teeth for me. I wrote one song on *Untying The Knot*, "Time Alive." I wrote all of the music and lyrics for it. It's like my own spiritual opus. And my wife and I co-wrote one song on the new album. It's another part of the evolving struggle: Everybody's plates keep changing.

It's a power balance. I think it's rare to have a group that's not led by one person. With a lot of the great bands, there was a main figure directing things. The Grateful Dead was Jerry's band, even though they all contributed. Phish was Trey's band. But String Cheese is multi-headed—anyone can be the ultimate leader at any moment. Power will be usurped and ideally graciously given to the next leader.

**MD:** That's cool when it works.

**Michael:** And it's a pain when it doesn't. Over the past couple of years I've begun to realize that the era of the solo is coming to an end, and that group-identity music is

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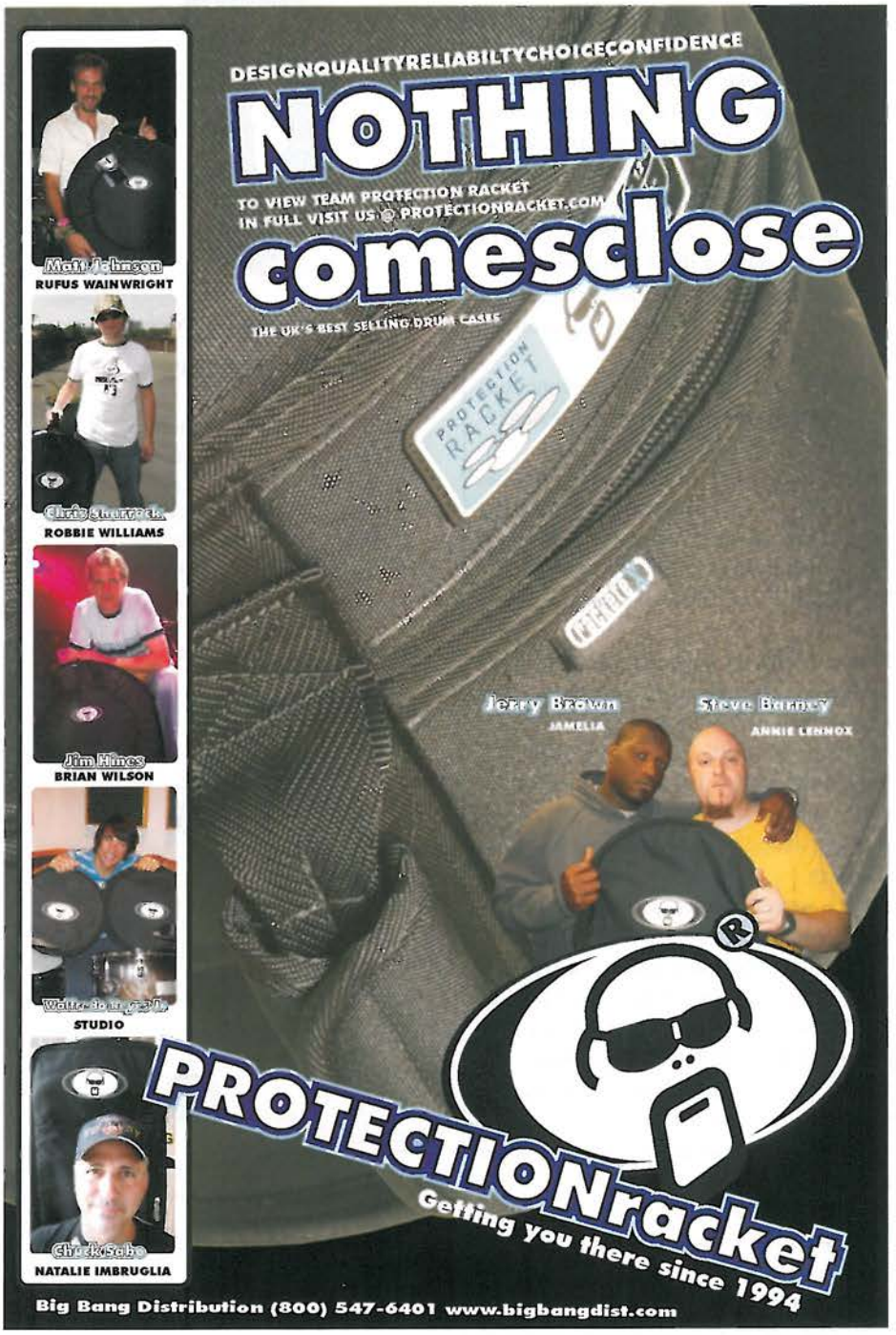



## Michael Travis

what I love. I'm more enthralled with how a group can create as much tension as was created at the height of the guitar player's most vibrant solo, but without anyone soloing, just raising the vibe of the group. That's what I'm enthralled with, because I think that's a model for how humanity can survive. It would be great if everybody could look into each other's playing to such a degree that nobody's on top of the mix doing something of their own design.

For the lead instrument in that setting, you're trying to be a capstone for what's being expressed through the whole band—the cherry on the sundae. The cherry on the sundae doesn't spaz all around, jump up and down, and have neon signs. It's just a cherry sitting there. It's needed, and it's bright red, but it's just one simple repeating melody line that is needed to bring it all together. The whole electronica thing is all about that.

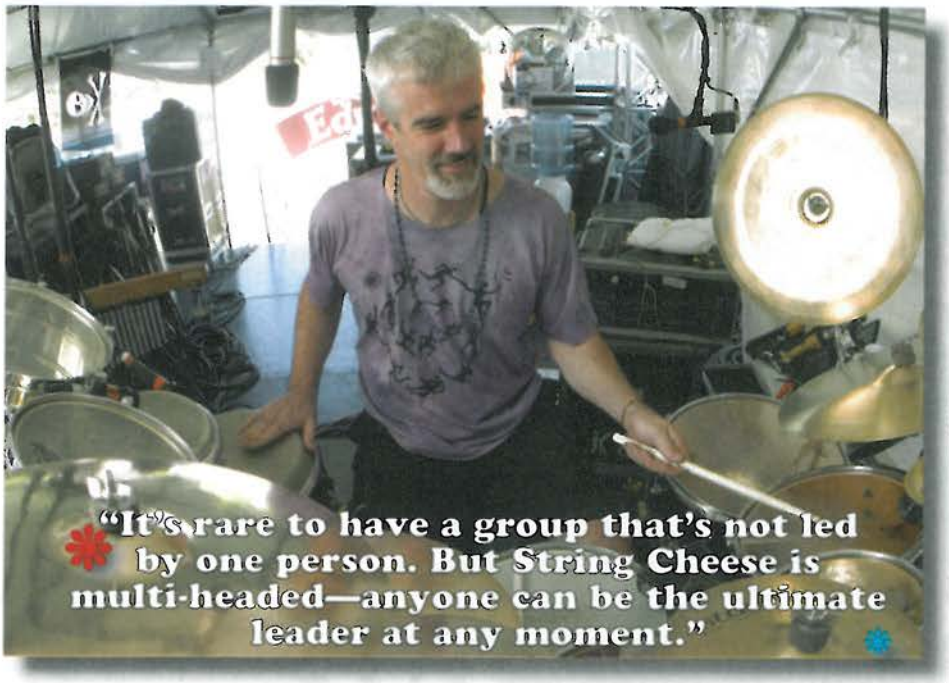
If you listen to the great electronica albums, very rarely is there a solo, and if there is, it's spread out and framed for hundreds of bars. Then, for sixteen bars, somebody will spaz out on a solo for a second, but then it has a lot of meaning.

**MD:** A lot of people don't understand when you suggest bringing it down and letting things just groove, simmer, and build.

**Michael:** Yeah, it's fun. With Zilla, that's one of our spoken rules. Zilla is 100% improv. When we have somebody sit in, we tell them, "Here's the deal. You can play the most rhythmical part, or repeating ostinatos, or long-noted melodies as a capstone kind of thing." And they look at us like, "What? No solos? What do I do?" One guy was honest enough to say, "I spent my whole life learning how to solo, and now I can't!" But when you take somebody that's so educated and you focus them to create a four-note melody that repeats, it means so much because it's such an educated melody. It's powerful.

**MD:** Tell me more about what you're doing in Zilla.

**Michael:** I'm playing drumkit and keyboards—sampler stuff. I'm trying to get the keyboard stuff down to where I can just lay pads behind everything, and then do occasional synthesizer or piano samples as the melody or just background rhythm. And I sometimes play bass on the keyboard while playing drums with the other hand. There's a guy who plays bass, guitar, and keyboards, and another guy who plays hammered dulcimer and mini-kit, which is something




he invented that is similar to what Trilok Gurtu plays. We do a lot of drum 'n' bass. Somebody described us as sounding like Tool sometimes. But we run the gamut. Hammered dulcimer is a hard instrument to make sound ugly. You can hear some of our music at Zillamusic.com.

**MD:** Does your Zilla drumkit have an accessory snare and other drum 'n' bass–type items?

**Michael:** Yes. With Zilla I have a 6x10 steel or brass snare, and I also have a 2x10 Jungle snare made by Sonor, which has a very good, crackly sound with jingles built into the shell of the drum.

**MD:** Your drumkit with String Cheese is big. What hand drums do you have worked into it?

**Michael:** Congas, bongos, and timbales all around a five-piece kit. The drums are made by Tribes, of Boulder. I think the whole thin tom shell thing is a fad that's dying. I'm tired of it. I like the thick, meaty, gets-out-of-the-way-quick kind of tom sound. Tribes drums are good if you like that sound. I play mostly Sabian and Zildjian cymbals.

**MD:** What's some of your favorite recorded work with SCI?

**Michael:** I think the double live String Cheese album, *Carnival '99*, was probably the height of our improvisational melding. I'm proud of that album. We were caught at a real high point, a period in our improvisational wanderings that was pretty merged.

The album we're about to put out with Zilla, called *Eggs*, as far as my personal drumming, will be the height of my current love for electronica. It's all sampler overlays, delays, and keyboard patches. I have the bass drum and snare triggered into a Roland SPDS sampler, and then I'm running that whole thing through a Line 6 delay pedal, getting the modulating delays and tapping in a triplet delay across the beat to give lots of swirling atmosphere. It sounds like another percussion instrument. Then when I'm playing keyboards with one hand, I'll put a 16th-note delay on the hi-hat, so it kind of sounds like a second hand playing drums.

**MD:** Do you do any of that in String Cheese?

**Michael:** No. I try to keep the concepts separate. With String Cheese I focus on just being a drummer and leave all of these other tricks to Zilla.

**MD:** How has it been working with Jason Hann, the new percussionist in String Cheese?

**Michael:** Oh, it's great fun. It's working out great. Even though I've been known as the guy who plays percussion and drums at the same time, I was only doing that a small percentage of the time. I do it the same percentage of the time now, but Jason adds all that other stuff on top. And he's very keen at watching. When I'm playing congas, he plays something else, and I switch up and he plays congas. The whole thing's a continuous flow.

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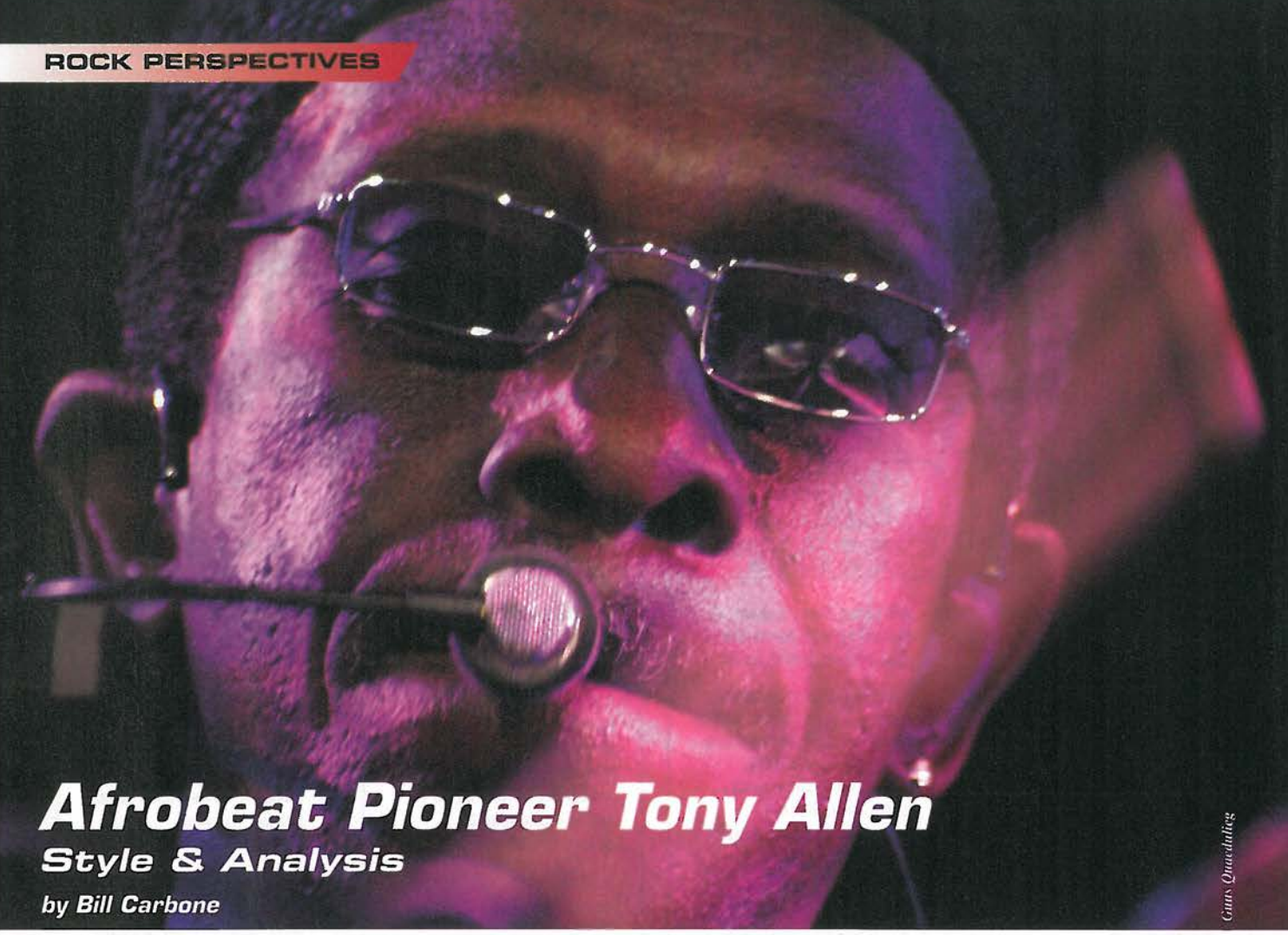
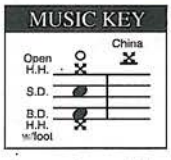


# Afrobeat Pioneer Tony Allen

## Style & Analysis

by Bill Carbone

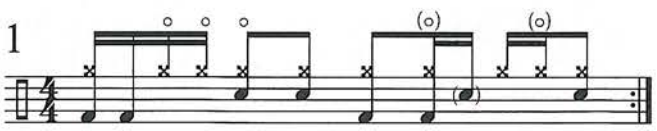
Chris Quweidaitis

**Nigerian born drummer Tony Allen is best known for his long association with composer/multi-instrumentalist/bandleader Fela Kuti. During their quarter-century of collaboration, Allen was the drumset player for the thirty-plus piece band, as well as the group's musical director. Allen's drumming and arranging were vital contributions to the sound since defined as "Afrobeat." Since his departure from Kuti's group in 1979, Allen has continued to blur rhythmic boundaries in his work with King Sunny Ade, Ernest Ranglin, Manu Dibango, and Roy Ayers, and on his own solo releases.**

Allen's drumming is a composite of traditional Nigerian drumming, the stick-work and melodicism of '50s and '60s jazz, the driving rhythms of the James Brown drummers, and Allen's own desire to push the boundaries of his abilities. As Tony recently stated in an interview with Dave Roozendall, "I was always looking for my sound. Listening to the great drummers of jazz—Art Blakey, Max Roach—I wanted to achieve something like they had, to be unique."

The following transcriptions, spanning from Allen's Fela period to his recent solo release, are a testament to his unconventional but driving grooves. They demonstrate Allen's ability to maintain the essence of a beat while continually adding and subtracting rhythms. Within these examples, parentheses are used to indicate notes that are occasionally added to the groove.

### "Sorrow Tears And Blood"

(Fela Kuti—*Opposite People/Sorrow Tears And Blood)*

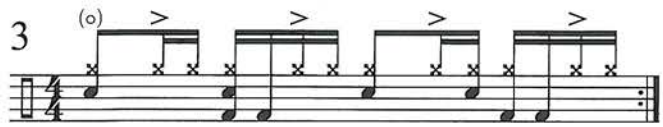
This groove contains two of Allen's signature traits: double 16th notes on the bass drum and open hi-hats in surprising places. The conversational pattern between the bass drum and snare resembles the antiphony of traditional West African drum ensembles, yet feels quite natural as a funk beat. As you're listening to the track, notice how Allen changes the location of his open hi-hats throughout the tune.

### "Zombie" (Fela Kuti—*Zombie*)

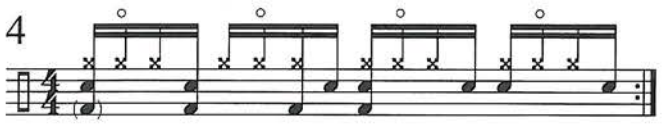
"Zombie" is taken at a blisteringly fast clip, but Allen maintains a relaxed groove throughout. The bass drum hit on the "e" of 2 and 4 is especially difficult to maintain at this tempo. Again, the bass drum and snare maintain an interlocking pattern. For a fun and challenging exercise, try voicing the bass drum and snare pat-

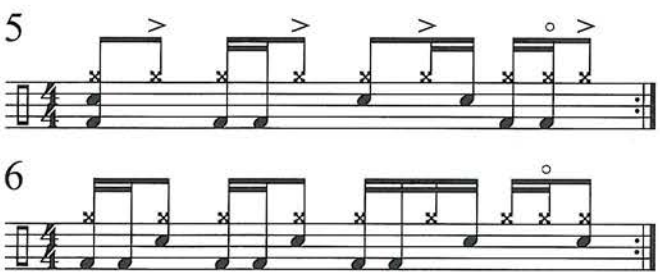
terns on different sound sources. For example, play the snare pattern on a cowbell and the bass drum pattern on a floor tom.

**"Shakara"** (Fela Kuti—*Shakara/London Scene*)

The intro to "Shakara" is classic Tony Allen, with snare hits on the downbeats and bass drum doubles on 2 and 4.

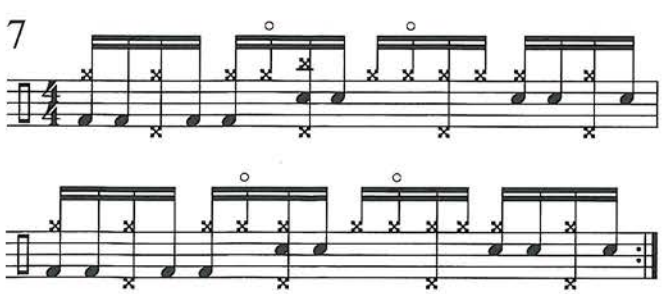



The small army of backing percussionists in Fela's band allows Allen to get even slinkier behind the bandleader's vocals, which appear later in the track. His snare and hi-hat patterns interact as a single voice over the syncopated bass drum.

Here are two more classic grooves from Tony's tenure with Fela. Example 5 is from the song "**Gentleman**," and Example 6 is from "**No Agreement**." You can find both of these tracks, plus the other Fela Kuti examples, on the MCA Records compilation *The Best Best Of Fela Kuti*.




**"Every Season"** (Tony Allen—*Homecooking*)

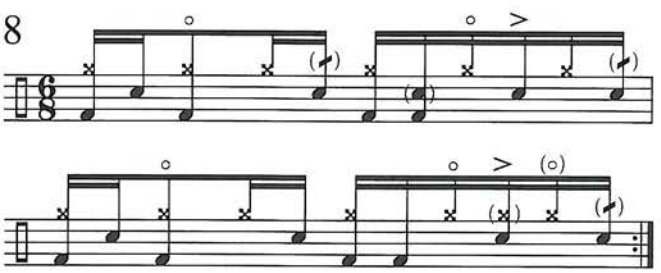
Allen's drumming has continued to evolve in the years since his departure from Fela's group. The smaller band size and modern recording techniques used on Allen's most recent album, *Homecooking*, invite attention to details in his drumming that were previously inaudible. On "Every Season" Allen lays down a clear "melody" between his bass drum and snare. His signature upbeat 16th-note hi-hat openings propel the groove forward.



**"Memories Of Senegal"**

(Ernest Ranglin—*Modern Answers To Old Problems*)

The relaxed 6/8 feel of this Ernest Ranglin song highlights the circular nature of Allen's playing. Almost all of his work with Fela Kuti is in 4/4 time, so it's interesting to hear how effortlessly Allen adapts his sound to 6/8. In this example, Allen's right hand remains steady on the hi-hat while his left hand provides syncopation on the snare.




*Bill Carbone is a full-time performer and educator currently splitting his time between Boston, Massachusetts and Middletown, Connecticut while working on his master's degree in ethnomusicology at Wesleyan University. He is a member of several groups that perform original reggae, Afrobeat, and jazz. He can be reached at junglebeatbill@yahoo.com.*

# Indian Rhythms

## An Intro For Western Drummers, Part 1

*by Steve Smith*

**I've been studying Indian rhythms for the past four years, and it's been a lot of fun for me. By working with some basic Indian theory and exercises, I've been able to really expand my phrasing and rhythmic vocabulary.**

Like I mentioned in my "Tour Diary" in the July 2005 issue of *MD*, I believe that the Indian rhythmic systems are largely an untapped resource for Western drummers. I truly feel that if you become adept at learning these concepts, you'll greatly increase your knowledge of rhythm and, in turn, improve your drumming. We'll go over some of these fundamentals in this series on the basics of rhythms from India.

One of the cornerstones of Indian music is learning to recite rhythms with your voice. That way you get a very clear picture of the rhythms you'll be playing. I find it very interesting that all Indian musicians do this, not just the drummers. As a result, Indian musicians have a very high degree of rhythmic awareness.

In south India, the language of vocal percussion is called konokol. This first lesson will be learning the konokol syllables that we'll use for the basic building blocks of rhythm.

Use "Dhaa" for beat one. For two beats in a row, as in two 8th notes or two 16th notes, use "Ta Ka." Three beats in a row, as in a triplet or a phrase of three 8th notes, is "Ta Ki Ta." Four beats in a row is "Ta Ka Di Mi." Five beats is generally phrased two plus three, which is "Ta Ka Ta Ki Ta."

Six beats is generally phrased three plus three: "Ta Ki Ta Ta Ki Ta." Other common phrases for six are four plus two: "Ta Ka Di Mi Ta Ka," or "Ta Ka _ Ta Ki Ta," where the second beat is held one beat longer.

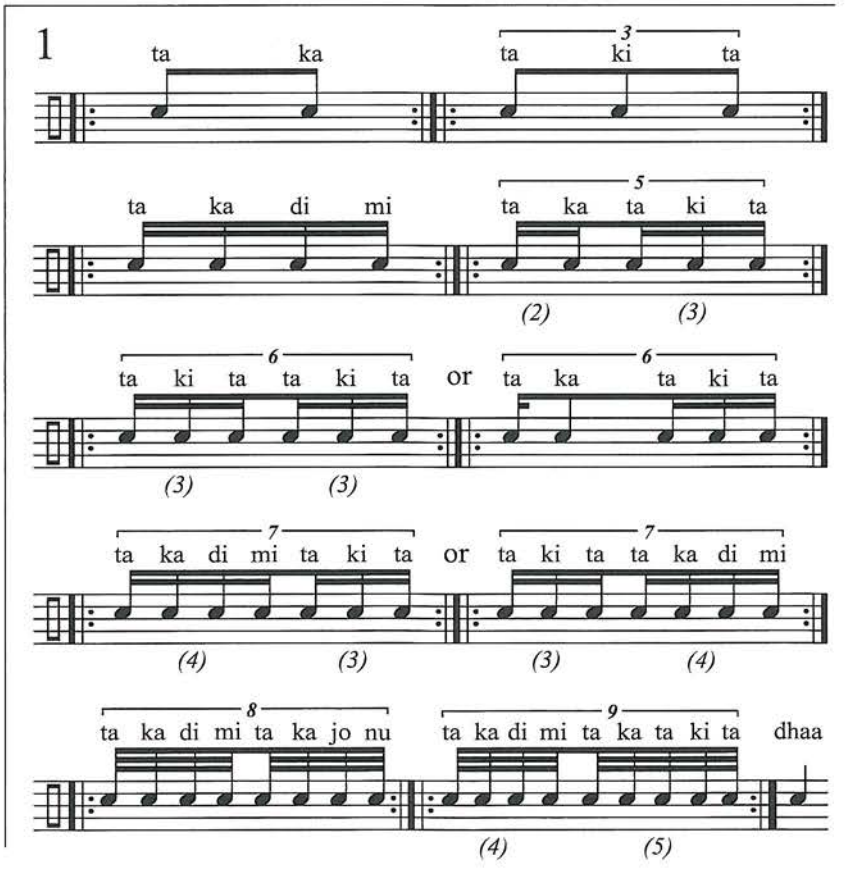
Seven is generally phrased four plus three, "Ta Ka Di Mi Ta Ki Ta," as well as three plus four, "Ta Ki Ta Ta Ka Di Mi." Eight is "Ta Ka Di Mi Ta Ka Jo Nu." Nine is generally four plus five, "Ta Ka Di Mi Ta Ka Ta Ki Ta." That's as far as we'll go, though obviously you can continue to ten, eleven, twelve, etc. There are many more syllables available, and we will get to a few more during this series. But this is a good place to start.

The first exercise to work on is getting comfortable with the subdivisions from two through nine using only the vocal sounds. This will give you practice with the syllables, and you can begin to internalize the various subdivisions of the beat. Repeat each rhythm over and over until you get more comfortable with them.

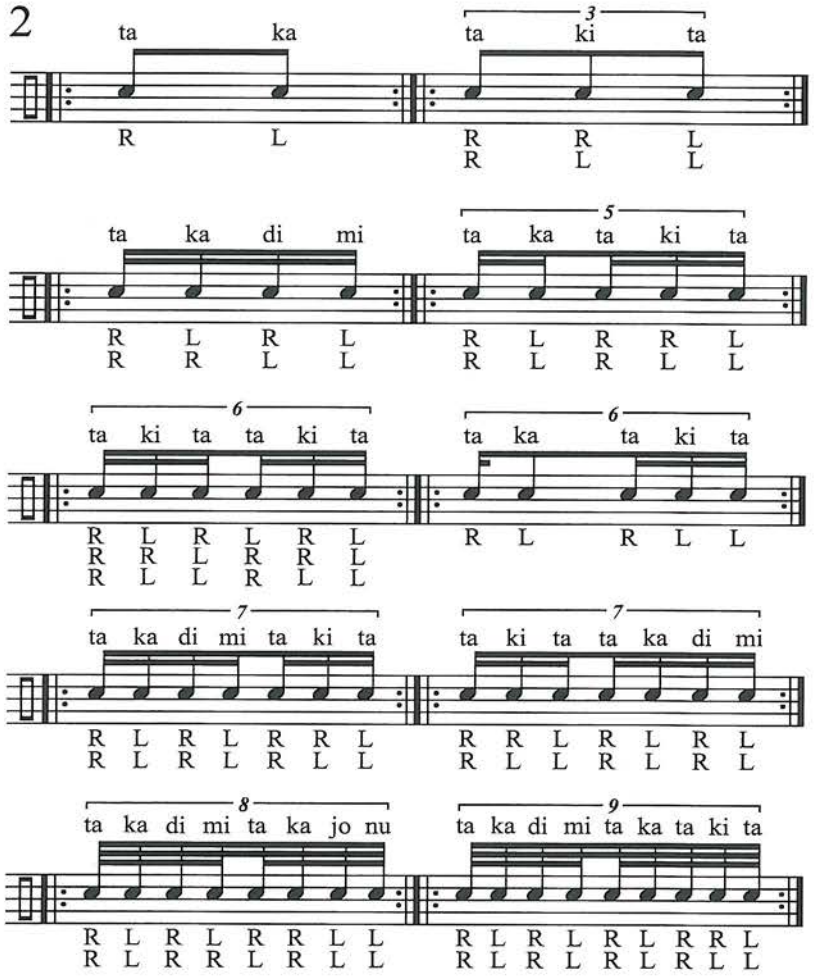
You'll find that you can recite these syllables much faster than you can recite the corresponding numbers. Be sure to memorize each phrase rather than continuing to read them. The Indian tradition is an oral tradition, and memorization is very important—especially when putting together longer phrases.

Let's start with a phrase of two, work our way up to nine, and end on one, so you get used to resolving the phrases to Dhaa.

2: Ta Ka
3: Ta Ki Ta
4: Ta Ka Di Mi
5: Ta Ka Ta Ki Ta
6: Ta Ki Ta Ta Ki Ta
7: Ta Ka Di Mi Ta Ki Ta
8: Ta Ka Di Mi Ta Ka Jo Nu
9: Ta Ka Di Mi Ta Ka Ta Ki Ta
1: Dhaa



The next step is to work on reciting the rhythms and playing them at the same time using the following sticking patterns. I came up with these stickings to approximate the sound and feel of the spoken rhythmic phrasing. Of course, there are many different stickings that you can come up with, but we'll get started with some of the stickings that I use. Start with the snare drum and then adapt them to the drumset.




Spend some time working on this material. Next month we'll take the next step.

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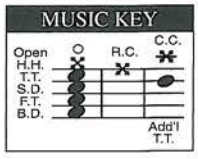
# The Ringo Fill

## Reflections On Leading With The Left Hand

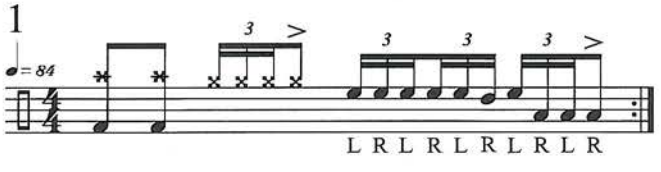
**by Ed Breckenfeld**



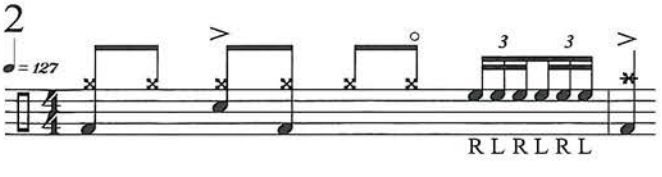

**I'll come clean: I've been fascinated by Ringo's unique drumming style for as long as I can remember. In the July 2001 issue of *Modern Drummer* I wrote a piece called "Ringo Starr's #1 Beatle Beats" in which I closely examined Ringo's grooves from the songs on the *Beatles 1* greatest-hits CD. For someone who thought he knew most everything about The Beatles' drum parts, it was a delightfully eye-opening experience.**

One of my favorite discoveries was the unusual move Ringo made in his famous tom fill from the intro of "Come Together." I had originally thought that Ringo simply swept around the kit in the typical clockwise fashion, but upon close listening, there seemed to be one tom hit out of place. When I tried to re-create the fill, the only way to make it work was to start it with the left hand. Of course! Ringo is left-handed but plays a right-handed kit. This would obviously have an affect on the way he plays his fills.

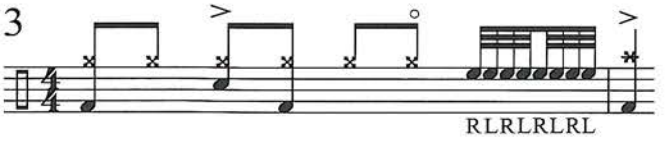
Take a look at the fill from "Come Together," and you'll see how the left-hand lead makes the movement possible. (0:00)




Recently, I had another interesting experience with Ringo's quirky fills. A local radio station was preparing a "Rampant Beatlemania" day, in which they play nothing but Beatles music for twenty-four hours. The host DJ asked one of my bands to submit a cover of a Beatles tune for the show. We chose the song "Wait," and booked studio time to record it. Before the session, the singer asked me, "Are you going to do that Ringo fill?" He was talking about Ringo's famous little tom roll leading into the song's chorus (0:12). It's the same fill he plays in the middle of the chorus in the Beatles classic "Ticket To Ride" (0:30). Well, *of course* I was going to play that fill! I listened to the original version a few times and decided that the fill was a pair of 16th-note triplets.

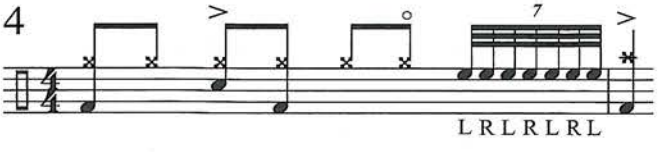



We nailed the rhythm track in one take, and I sat back to listen to the overdubs go down. As the track was played back over and over, I began to have some doubts about that fill. Finally I stopped the session and said, "I think I've blown the Ringo fill. Let me listen to the original version for a second." Sure enough, it sounded like Ringo had more strokes in there than I did. But how? I ran back into the drum booth and tried 32nd notes, which would make it eight notes in the one-beat fill to my six.



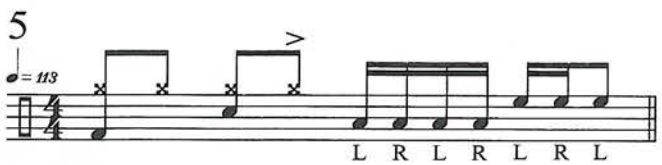

But that fill felt forced and somehow too fast for the song's tempo. I couldn't believe that Ringo would have played something that awkward to pull off, as his drumming had always looked so easy and effortless. Anyway, by this time, it was too late to think about scrapping the take just for a drum fill, even if it was "The Ringo Fill." I decided that my version would still be okay, and the song certainly wouldn't suffer for it.

The next day I started thinking about that drum fill, and it dawned on me: Wouldn't left-handed Ringo have started even this quick little fill with his left hand? Since he played his cymbal with his right hand, could he have squeezed *seven* notes into that one-beat fill? Well, I tried it on my kit, and it sounded *exactly* right. No wonder six notes *and* eight notes didn't seem to work. I had to laugh—leave it to Ringo to play a septuplet fill! (How cool is that?)

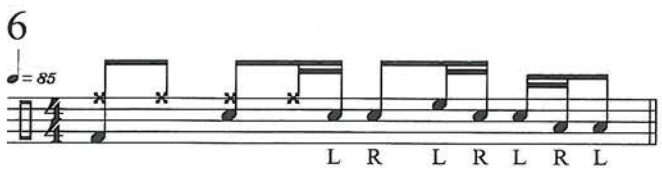



All this has me thinking about the unusual sounds that a left-hand lead can generate. I searched around and found a few more examples from Ringo's work with The Beatles.

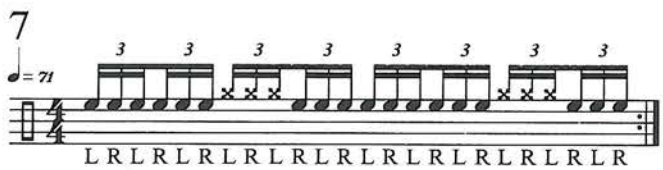
**"You Won't See Me"** (2:56)

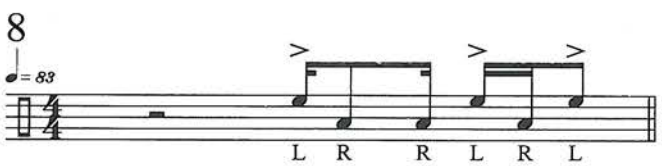


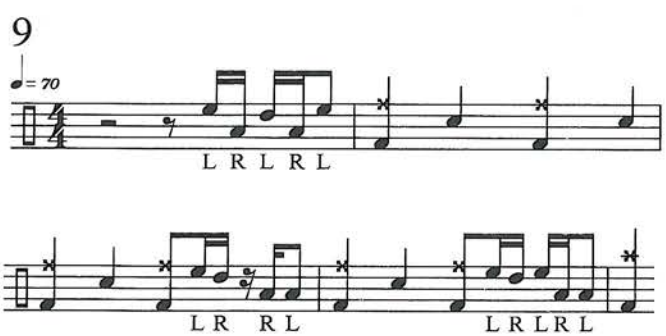

**"Blue Jay Way"** (1:22)




**"Something"** (1:14)

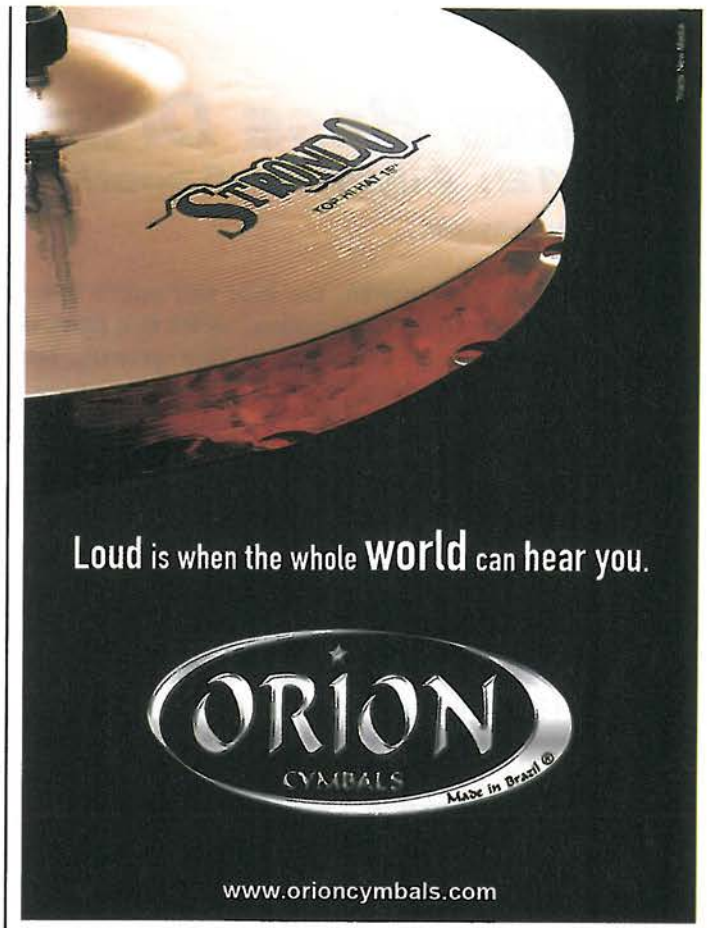



**"Carry That Weight"** (0:00)

**"The End"** (1:46)




Could these fills be played right-handed? With the use of double strokes or cross-over stickings, perhaps. But they work much more naturally with a left-hand lead. There's no doubt that Ringo's left-handedness played a major roll in the unique sound of his drumming. It's something that you don't realize until you try to re-create it for yourself.

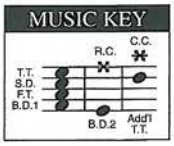
*You can contact Ed Breckenfeld through his Web site, www.edbreckenfeld.com.*

# Double Bass Drumming

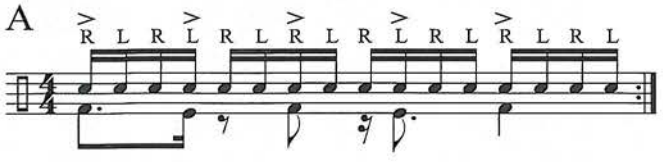
## Part 12: Fill/Solo Accent Patterns

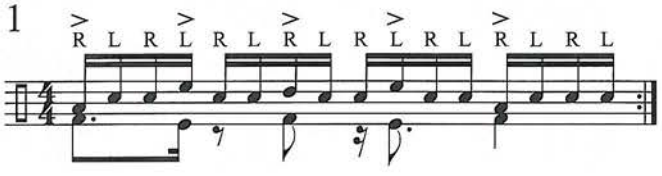
**by Rod Morgenstein**



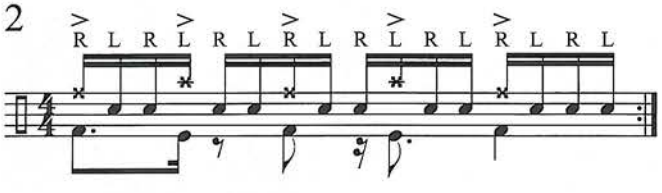

**Last month, we had the snare drum playing constant 16th notes, while the bass drums doubled some of the notes. This month, let's expand on that technique.**

Examples 1–5 are variations of Example A, which is one of the snare/BD patterns from last month's article. Here's Example A.

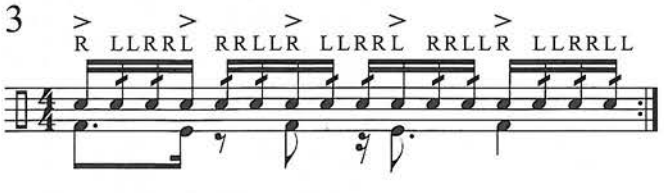
A

Example 1 applies the accents to the toms.

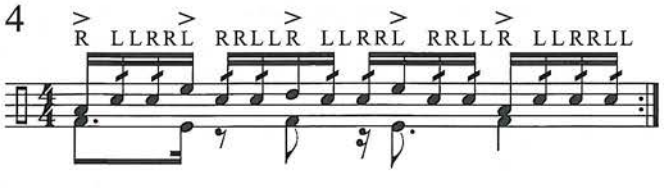
1

Example 2 has the cymbals playing the accents.

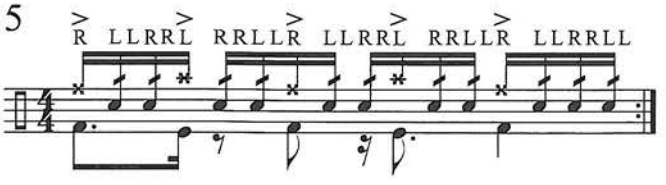
2



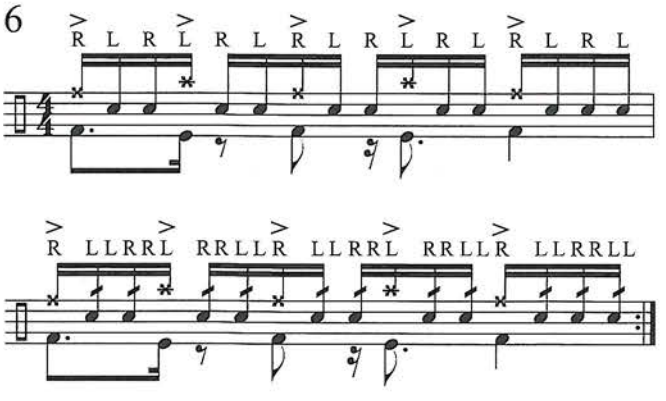

For Examples 3–5, the unaccented notes on the snare are played as double strokes (32nd notes), which, when played accurately and crisply, are quite effective. The accents in Example 3 are played on the snare drum.

3

In Example 4, the accents are played on the toms.

4

Now play the accents on the cymbals.

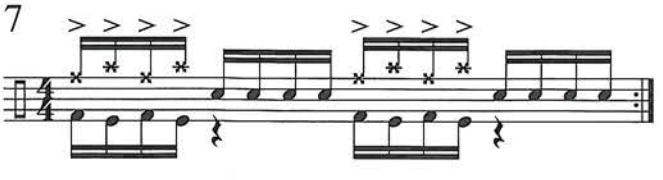
5

By mixing and matching the above examples, you can create a lot of interesting two-measure phrases. Here's a combination of Examples 2 and 5.

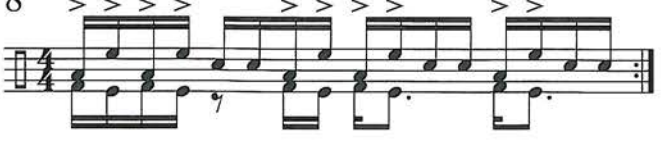
6




Examples 7–10 are additional fill/solo accent patterns that have been voiced around the kit.

7



8

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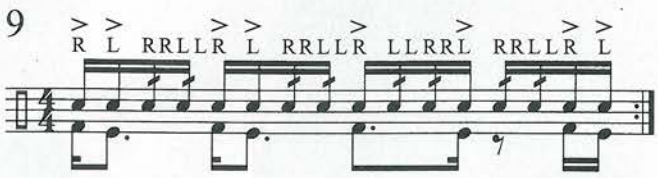
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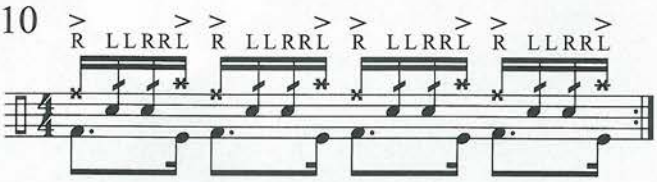
As you're experimenting with these accent patterns, try using various toms, cymbals, and other sounds on your drumset. For example, Example 5 has the right-hand accent played on the ride cymbal, but it's just as effective to play a crash cymbal instead.

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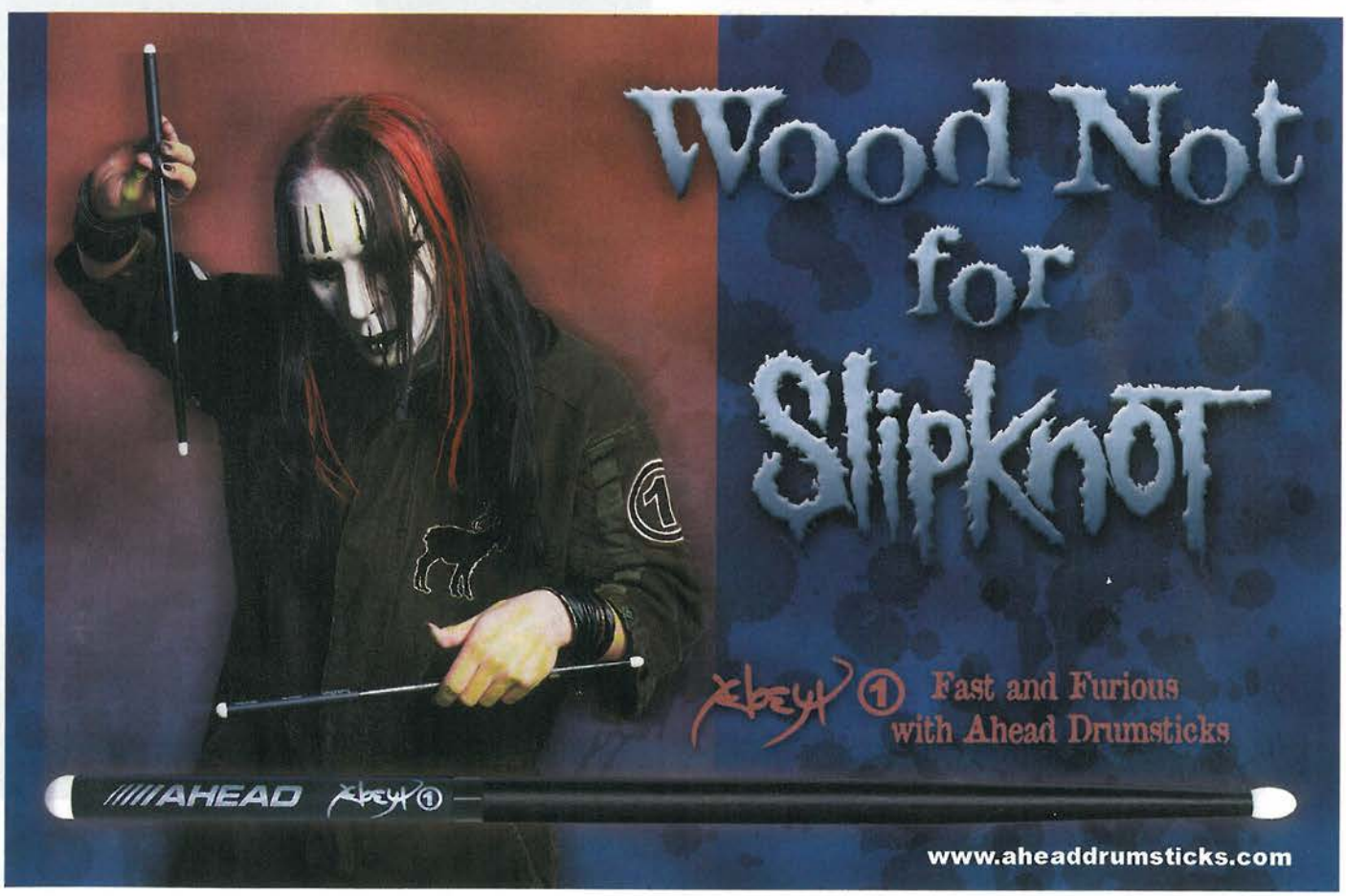
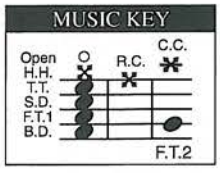


# Stanton Moore

## Corrosion Of Conformity's "Stone Breaker"

***text and transcription by Stanton Moore***

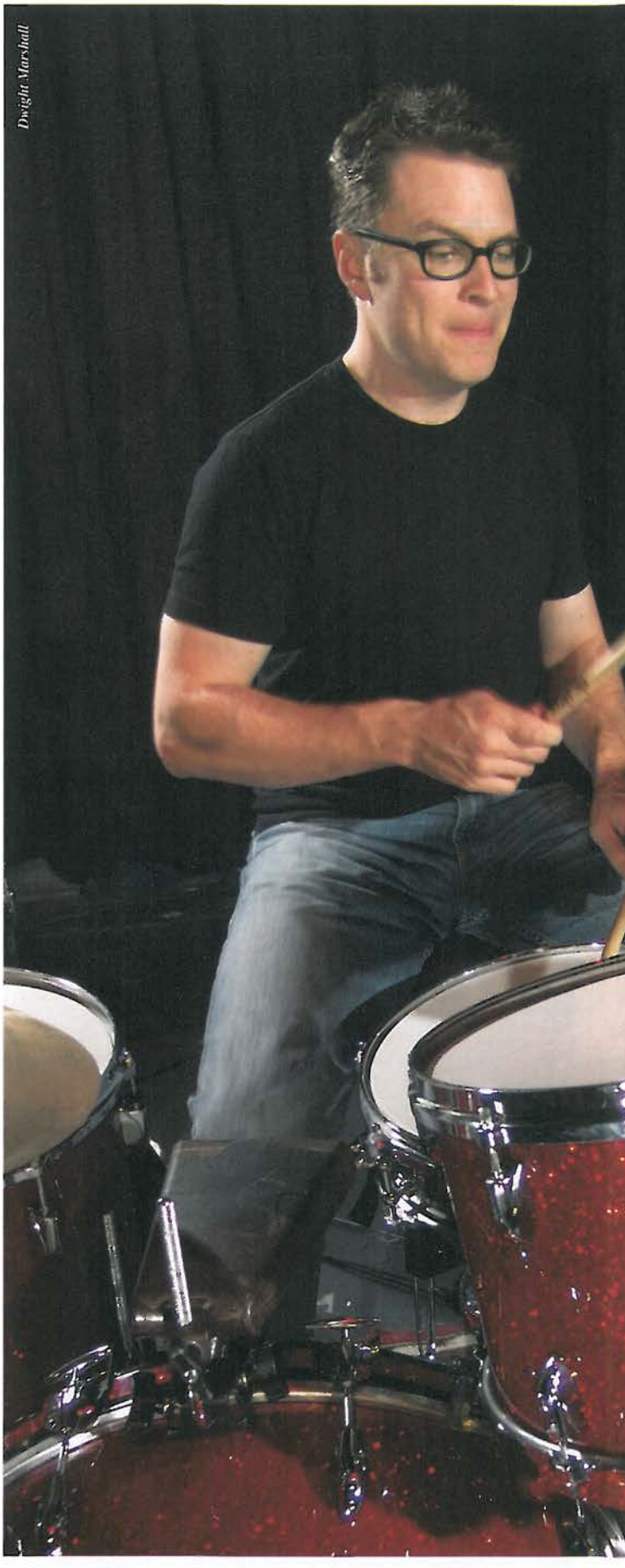



**When I recorded "Stone Breaker" for the new C.O.C. record *In The Arms Of God*, I was still learning the song but was encouraged to improvise wildly. Later, I was asked to come back for the video shoot knowing my recorded parts note for note. Since the original track was mostly improvised, I had to transcribe my performance to help me re-learn the tune. The result is this month's *Rock Chart*.**

For this session, I was going for a "vintage on steroids" approach. I used '60s Gretsch round badge drums (9x13, 16x16, and 16x18 toms, 14x22 bass drum) and my old 1941 G.M. Helm 12x26 bass drum on a remote pedal, which I played on this tune. I used Remo coated Ambassadors on the tops, smooth Whites on the bottoms of the toms, and PowerStroke 3s on the bass drums. For cymbals, I used the same Bosphorus models that I use on most of my jazz gigs: 14" hi-hats, a 22" ride, and two 20" crash-rides. The snare is a 4x14 from Dunnett.

Even though C.O.C. is a heavy rock band, I drew a lot of my ideas from the vocabulary that I developed on jazz gigs. I used a lot of triplet figures at different points in the song that I either repeated or altered in some way to keep them sounding fresh. Note the figure at measure 66 that's reused in measure 94. It's also re-voiced and started at different places in measures 118, 123, and 128. In measure 81, I played a four-note phrase over triplets.

I hope you enjoy checking this out.


Dwight Marshall

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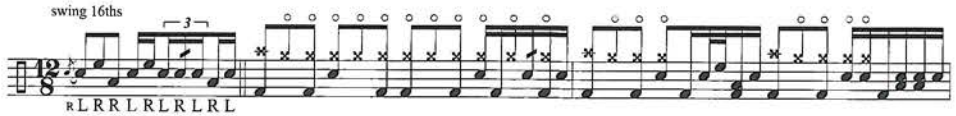
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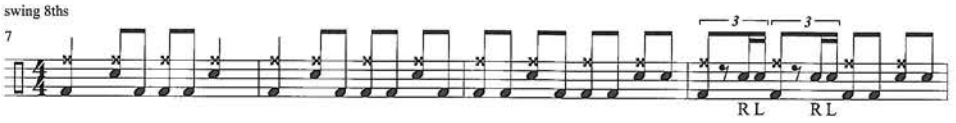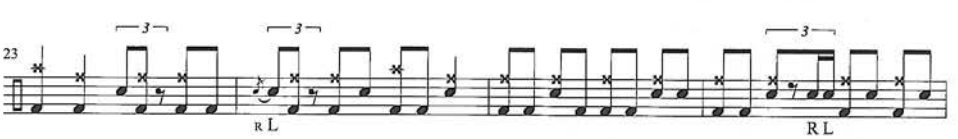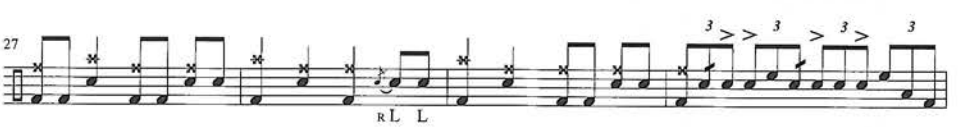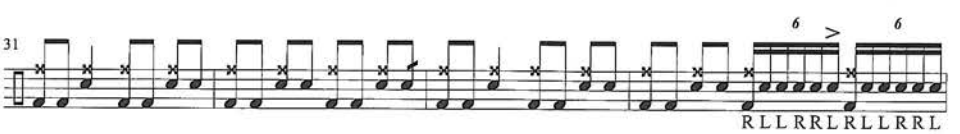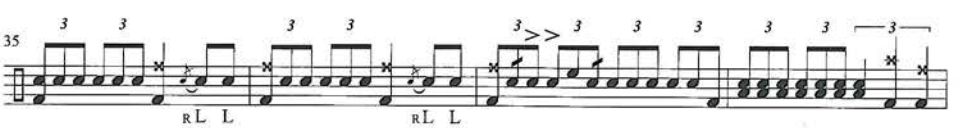
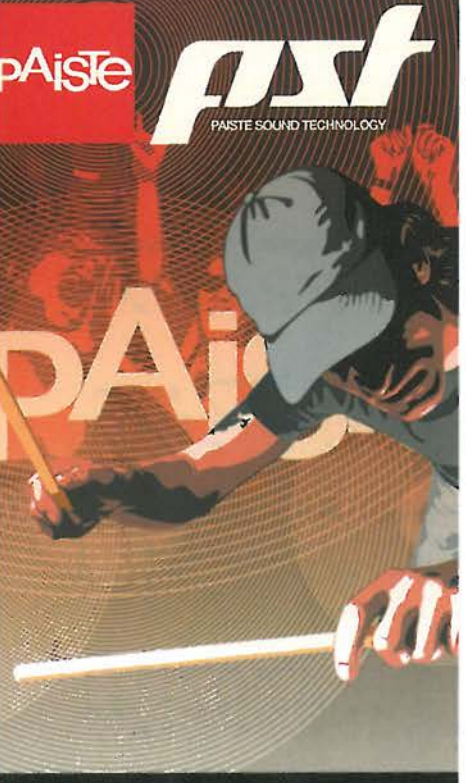


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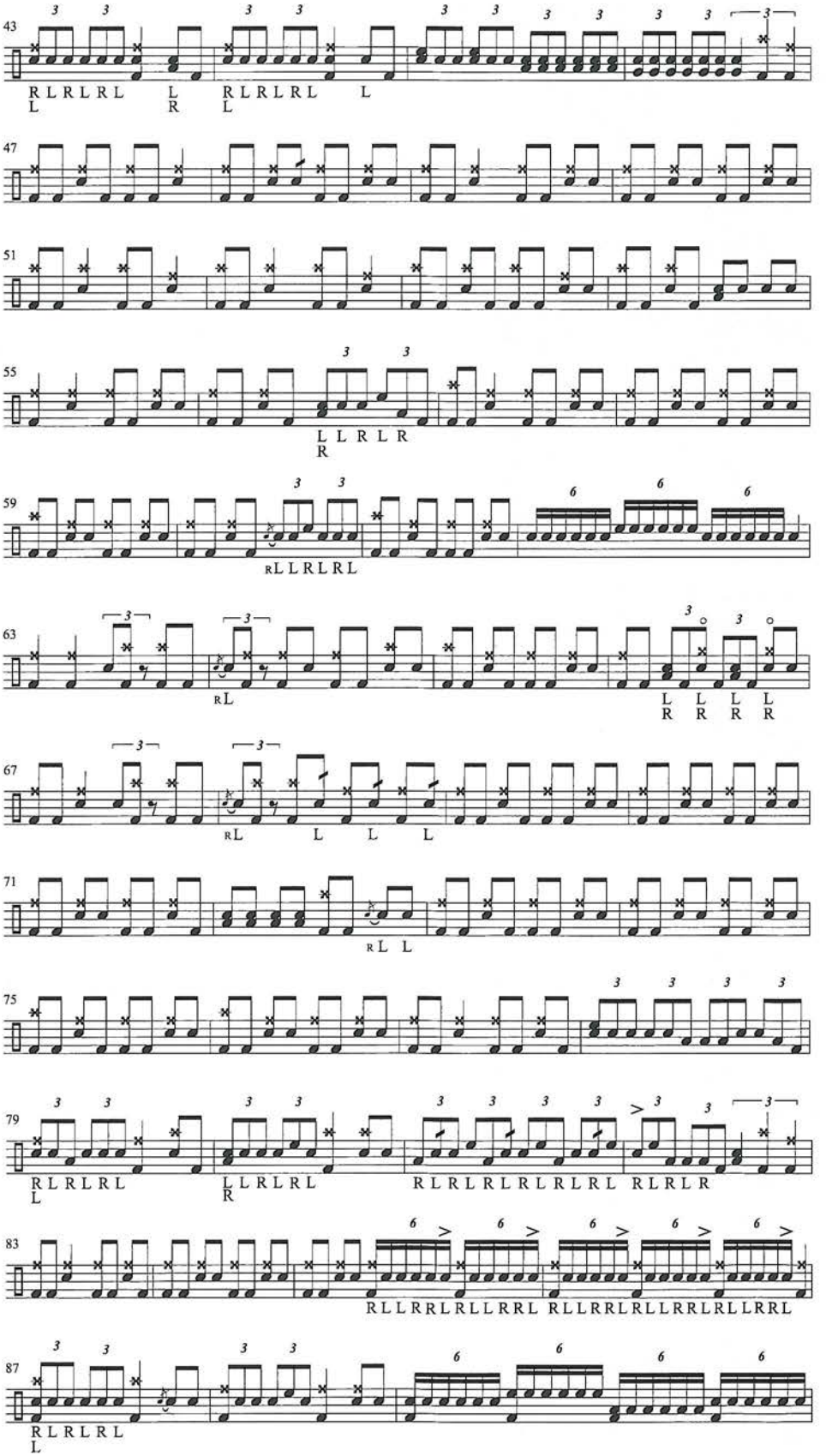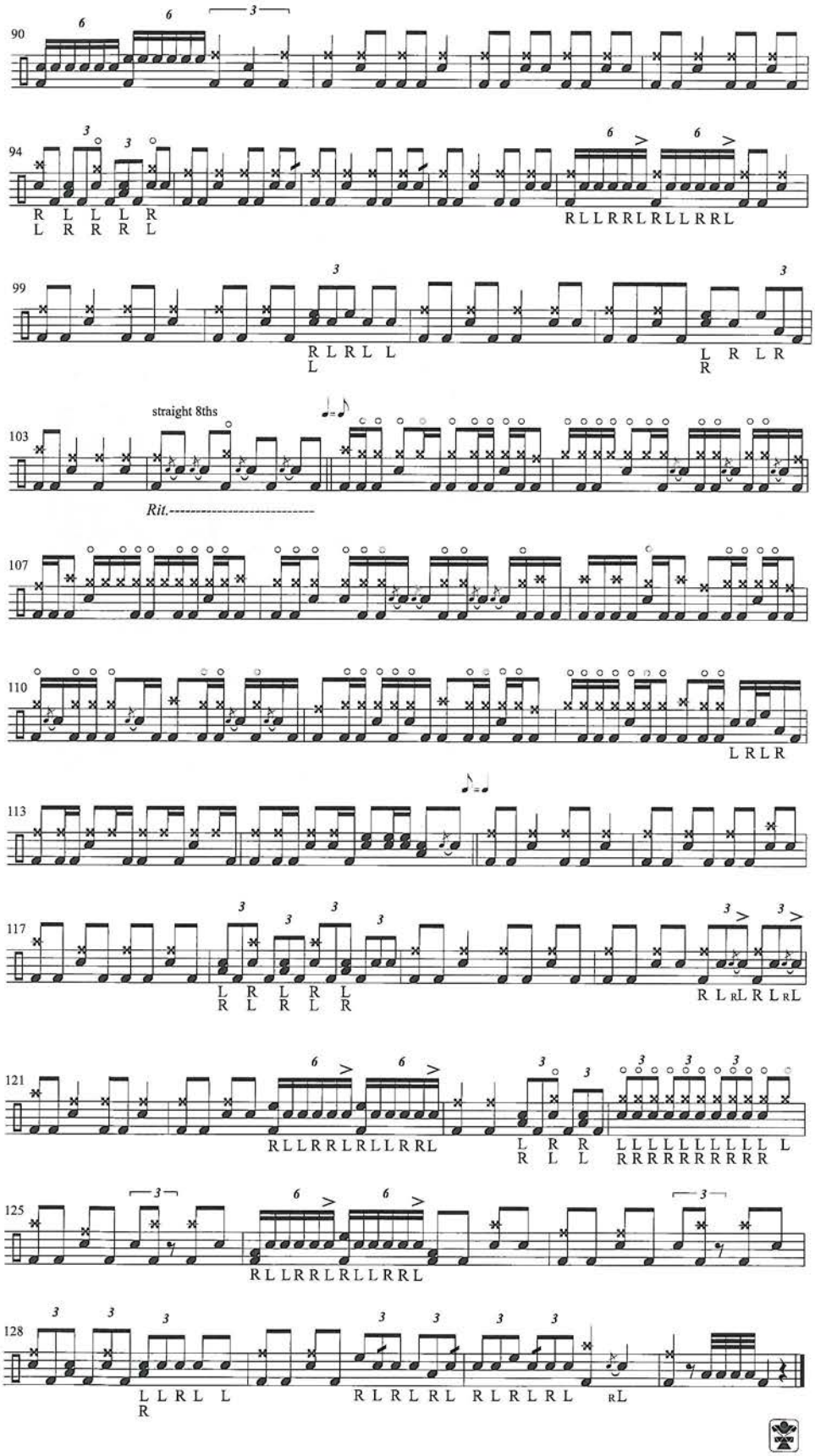
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94
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# Under Siege

## Passing A Drumming IQ Test

*by Billy Ward*

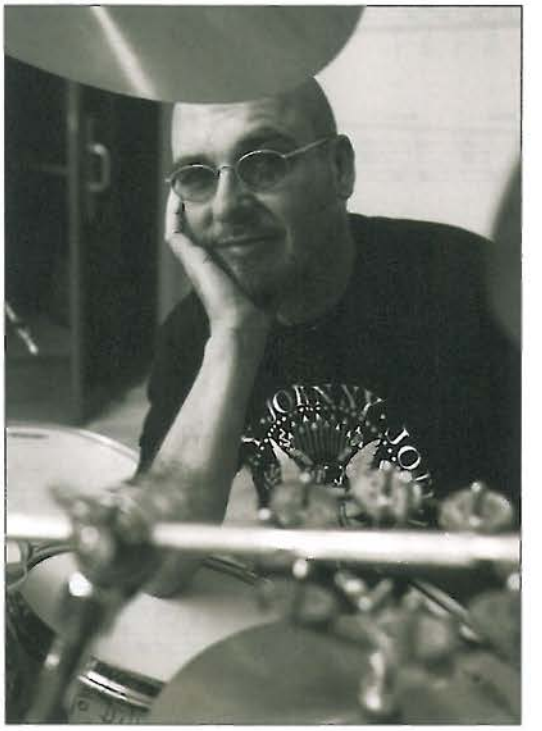
**Just a little more than a decade ago, I was sitting in film composer Gary Chang's kitchen, waiting for my recording session to begin. This would be maybe the fifteenth film that I played on for Chang. He records the drums and other rhythm section instruments in his home studio, which is top-shelf. I had a 6:00 P.M. call for the session, but it was now 11:00 P.M. and they still weren't ready for me. It was obviously going to be a long night before I even started.**

The movie was *Under Siege,* starring Steven Seagal. Gary had been working for about thirty-eight hours without sleep, and it was obvious he wasn't going to have much energy left for me. "I'm sorry, Billy," he apologized. "It won't be much longer." At midnight, I finally was invited into the studio, where the drums and mic's were all in place. Working with people like Gary and engineer Brian Reeves, who I trust and enjoy as musicians *and* friends, saved me the usual angst I otherwise would be displaying after sitting around so long.

*"Sometimes the hardest things that we have to perform in the professional music world are things that we've never practiced."*

"Okay," Gary said, "Brian, run the cue." Brian hit the play button, and we sat there with an obviously exhausted film composer as the scene unfolded. It looked like a fight on a ship was about to break out, where Seagal was going to kick some butt. Gary began describing what he wanted me to play during the scene. "It's quiet in the beginning. Enter here, now FRUIT OF THE LOOM! (Later, after some music goes by) Ga! Boom! Ga...Da!" Gary was singing where he wanted tom hits during the cue. "Play little metallic sounds here." Then later, he said: "ShokadoogadoogashokadoogadoogadoogadoogaBANG!"

I had worked a lot with Gary, so I understood



what he was saying. Here he was, speaking my wacky drum language! Translation: "fruit of the loom" is a tom fill—a four-stroke ruff actually—beginning with the highest tom and finishing with the bass drum. "Ga Da" is two 8th notes on different toms, if he changes the pitch while singing. I had to guess what "shokadoogas" meant.

I made a mental note to turn the snares off so I could use the snare as a third tom, since I only had two toms at the session (which are almost always enough, and were again that evening). Then the cue changed tempos and feel. "Fish," he yelled. "Now BOOM!" He continued.... "Now play a groove here. Make it like 'Miles Runs The Voodoo Down.'" (God, I love references like this one! I decided he wasn't speaking about the specific beat, but the *vibe* of that track.) "Keep the toms present. NOW, lots of toms! But still very Miles/swingy."

Just then I thought I heard a bar of two, darn it! That would make my eventual half-written chart more difficult. "Don't mark any of the actual hits on film," Gary continued. "Play *between* them." Then he says, "Lay out here. Catch that 'bucket of fish.'" ("Bucket of fish" is the same four-stroke ruff as "fruit of the loom," only the first three hits are all on the

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snare, ending with a cymbal crash supported by a bass drum hit. Cymbals = fish. Get it?)

"Man," I was thinking, "this is going to be a long, difficult cue, and it's *still* going!" Gary continued as more bad guys showed up on the screen. "Now it's going to build! And feather out...wait...feather out... right...here." ("Feather out" is a Gary-ism for an acoustically performed fade—it usually happens with cymbals.) "I think that's it, but try something here as well if you like." Then he added, "Got it?" "Yeah." I lied.

I knew I wasn't going to get anymore out of Gary. He was dead tired. I was hoping Brian had paid attention to the cue as well—he is such a *musical* engineer. But I knew the heat was mostly on me, because Brian had also no doubt been working the same long hours as Gary. Engineers work long hours! Yet I've found Brian always available for a musical decision when I get to the end of my rope, so I figured we'd get through this successfully *together*. Gary then turned away and said, "Okay, I've gotta get some sleep. Wake me up when you're done." He left.

*Listening to all the diverse, beautiful broad styles of music out there helps us find the exact, right, musical choice.*

Since there was no chart (there was *never* any time for a completed finished chart with Chang), I had to count on my fractured memory of his walk-through. With Gary's music, I learned to write down the time code numbers of where the big events ("bucket of fish," "fruit of the loom," and so on) happen. So I looked over at Brian and said, "Did you get any of those numbers?" He replied, "Yeah, I got a few of 'em. Let's look at it again."

As the cue unfolded for the second time, I tried to write one of my quickie charts. I was thinking, "Thank God it's in four...but what happened there? Was that a bar of two?" Brian wrote down the time code numbers where the drum music pivoted. That guy is priceless!

It turned out that the cue desired a kind of too-fast James Brown pattern with dislocated backbeats (more than James would do). I've learned that, in movies—particularly in underscoring—it's better to not have too many backbeats in a row because this takes the audience's ear away from the screen and into the soundtrack. As a drummer, it's hard to skip some seemingly random backbeats, because all our lives we try to nail the 2 and 4. But this

**"Play 'ShokadoogadoogashokadoogadoogadoogadoogaBANG!' Now, lots of toms—but still very Miles/swingy." Supporting the action in a top action film.**

is one of the many uncomfortable drumming waters that I've learned to swim in...well, at least dog-paddle!

We woke Gary up two and a half hours later, and he was pleased with what we recorded. Well, in all honesty, he was simply dead on his feet. I always left Gary's sessions with nothing left behind. Thank you, Gary, for teaching me so much about music and drumming.

Sometimes the hardest things that we have to perform in the professional music world are things that we've never practiced. You study the audition tape and can nail it, but then they throw something totally wacky at you. How can we foresee some of these "IQ tests" and be ready for them? Listening to all the diverse, beautiful broad styles of music out there helps us get through to the essence of the work to find (and perform) the exact, right, musical choice. My understanding of Gary's reference to "Miles Runs The Voodoo Down" (from *Bitches Brew*) is an example of this.

I believe that it's important to put each of us through our own personal IQ tests on the drums. Step away from the norm. Don't just "work" on things that you're good at, but *invite* uncomfortable concepts into your music room. I mean, don't just practice. Practice making *music* out of the clumsy moments during your playing. This is what I call "practice-playing." I've written and spoken about this before.

Here's one example of practice-playing: I'll sit down at the drums and choose only two to four instruments on the kit, and then proceed to perform a piece of *music*. I act like I'm a composer, like Gary Chang, and mentally, as it's taking place, chart a course through ten minutes of drum music.

Perhaps in the beginning, I simply listen to the drums and determine an order of sounds—a melody, so to speak—determined by the order in which the drums are played. Then I add a groove. Then I go back to the melody and incorporate it inside the groove—that is, I don't drop the groove, but somehow keep it going while trying to play the melody. Of course, at this point, I'll usually mess up and it all falls apart. This is the *golden moment*, when I'm actually going to learn something new. I'll work on the technique that failed me to keep the melody within the groove—the sticking, the dynamics—and while mechanically learning these new moves, I'll *think*.

I'll consider if there is another application for this idea. I might pursue the same course (even the same pattern if I like it) the next day, or I'll try something else. Some of these things that we discover under these circumstances can become some of our personal best and favorite things in our arsenal.

Involve your head when you practice. Use your mind. Many good gigs—like a very drummy *Under Siege* cue—require it!

*Billy Ward has worked with Carly Simon, Robbie Robertson, Ace Frehley, John Patitucci, and Joan Osborne. His book,* Inside Out: Exploring The Mental Aspects Of Drumming, *was recently released by Modern Drummer Publications. He also has an award-winning DVD out,* Big Time. *Billy can be reached at his Web site, www.billyward.com.*

# Blues Drumming

## Beyond The Beats

*by Mike Sandler*

**A million drummers can play "blues beats." So why do some blues drummers rock the house, while others sound like they're plodding through molasses? There must be more to blues drumming than meets the eye and ear. But what?**

This elusive quality that makes blues music the real deal is much romanticized. The colorful, rootless lives of the early bluesmen and the legends of deals with the devil did not exactly help listeners to hear the blues objectively. The misconception arose that the blues is accessible only to mystics, alcoholics, and sharecroppers.

But blues "mojo" is not the occult knowledge that popular legend would make it out to be. Like other genres, the blues has its own conventions, which can be described and studied in concrete musical terms. The fact that blues is not as structurally complex as some other genres does not mean that there is nothing to learn beyond new ways to play a shuffle. Understanding this broader picture—the elements of blues drumming *beyond* the patterns—is what makes the difference between "a drummer who knows blues beats" and "a blues drummer."

By way of illustration, in this article we'll zoom in on a great recorded performance. Guitarist Duke Robillard's *Stretchin' Out Live* album (Stony Plain Records, available at www.dukerobillard.com) features a smoking band anchored by drummer Marty Richards. *Stretchin' Out Live* demonstrates how much a good drummer can add to the blues. Song titles mentioned below refer to cuts from this recording.

### Simple And Subtle

The most misunderstood thing about the blues is its simplicity. To those who have not listened closely, the blues is nothing more than a few chords, one-note solos, and scrunched-up faces. But if it's so easy to play the blues, why does no one else sound like B.B. King?

Close examination of the blues yields the revelation that blues is not simplistic...it's subtle. Blues musicians like B.B. King have a highly refined sense of melody, phrasing, and pitch. Rather than being concerned with how many notes he can play in a measure, a blues musician focuses on how much he can get out of the notes he plays.

Drummers don't bend strings and squeeze meaning out of microtonal pitch changes. But we still have our own ways of saying more with less. Since blues songs use relatively few chord changes, and since the music has to hit the listener in the gut, the fundamental groove is more important than the ability to navigate complex musical structures. Skittery fusion licks at a blues gig would generate blank stares from the audience and glares from your bandmates. Great blues drummers can play uncomplicated patterns so in-the-pocket that there's lint down there. And when they add or change something, you notice.

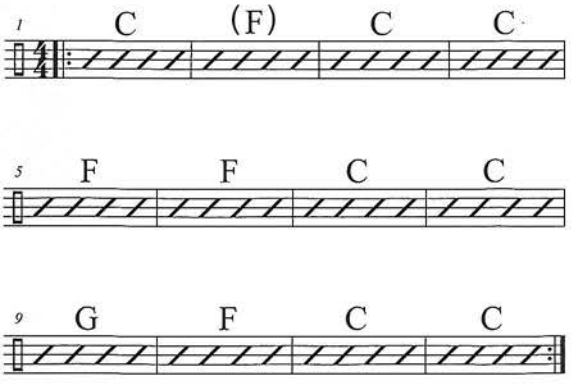
One simple way to make your blues drumming more interesting is to highlight accents. An example of this is Marty Richards' playing on "Too Hot To Handle." During the last chorus, Marty pops out of his groove to lay on cymbal accents that add punctuation to the already lilting riff. It's just a few cymbal crashes, but it's drumming like this that keeps blues exciting.

### That 12-Bar Thing

Not *all* blues music follows the traditional 12-bar blues pattern. But since so many blues songs follow this powerful structure, learning it is time well spent.

Here is the pattern in the key of C, written out with the basic chord names.

Measures 1-4: C (some songs go to F in measure 2 and back to C in measures 3 and 4)
Measures 5-6: F
Measures 7-8: C
Measure 9: G
Measure 10: F
Measures 11-12: C



**Marty Richards' drumming on Duke Robillard's Stretchin' Out Live epitomizes the finer points of blues drumming.**

For the drummer playing a 12-bar blues, the places where the chords change are your guideposts. You don't need to know what chords the piano is playing as much as where they change and how they flow together. For example, a standby of slow blues is to build a crescendo over measures 1 through 4, then drop to a hush at measure 5. The drummer can add to this buildup with accented 8th notes over measures 3 and 4, maybe capping it off with a muted cymbal crash on the downbeat of measure 5.

A frequent opportunity to play more musically happens at the turnaround. A turnaround is a short melody that starts the pattern over. It is usually played over measures 11 and 12, often with a shift to the V chord ("the five chord," which is G in our example) in the last two beats. You might get by just shuffling your way through the turnaround, but it will sound more like you are listening if you add some rhythmic energy to it. This is not the time for Neil Peart tom rolls, but a nice little triplet pattern might get the other players pumped up to do it again.

If the song goes to the V chord in the turnaround, know exactly where the change is (On beat 3? On the "&" of 2?) and accent it with a cymbal, snare pop, or sparse fill. A good turnaround calls attention to a new beginning, helping to refresh the excitement. For subtle and powerful turnarounds, listen to Marty Richards on "Tell Me Why."

You can also make things interesting at the end of a song. After a few turnarounds (and a nonverbal indication from the guitarist that his fingers are bleeding), it's time to wrap it up. Many blues songs end

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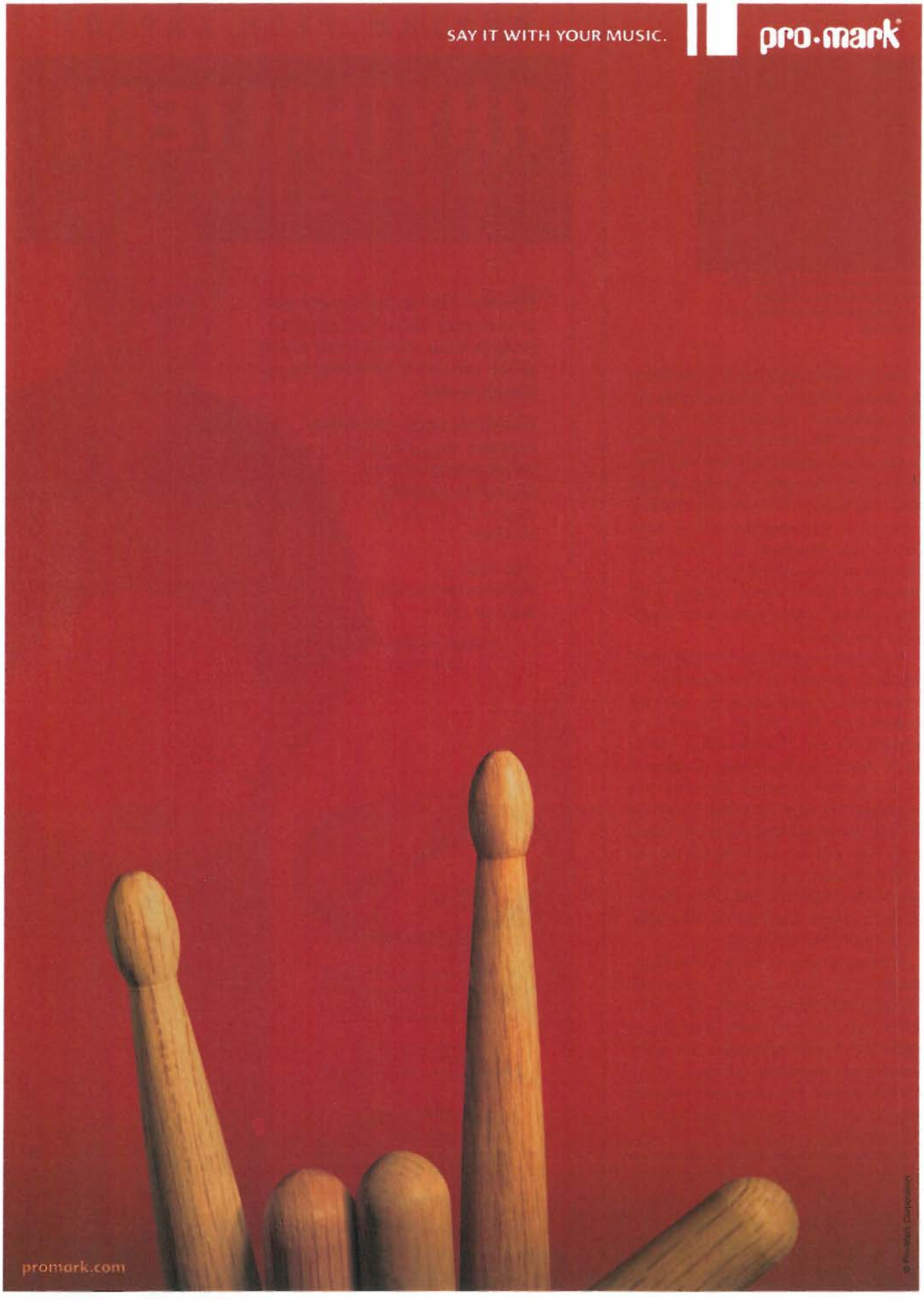

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Paul Natkin/Photo Reserve

Sam Lay toured and recorded with Little Walter, Willie Dixon, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, and The Paul Butterfield Blues Band, and he was in Bob Dylan's backup band when Dylan introduced electric rock at the Newport Folk Festival. Lay also recorded with Dylan, notably on the Highway 61 Revisited album.

by playing a melody with a strong sense of resolution (although the ending chord is often quite *un*resolved). The drummer can build the fun here as well by announcing the ending run with a little fill, or by changing the beat slightly during the run. The meter might also be changed, such as by going from a shuffle to straight time over the last measure. Nothing makes a band sound more together than a good blues ending. In addition to great turnarounds, "Tell Me Why" features an ending you could spend a day studying.

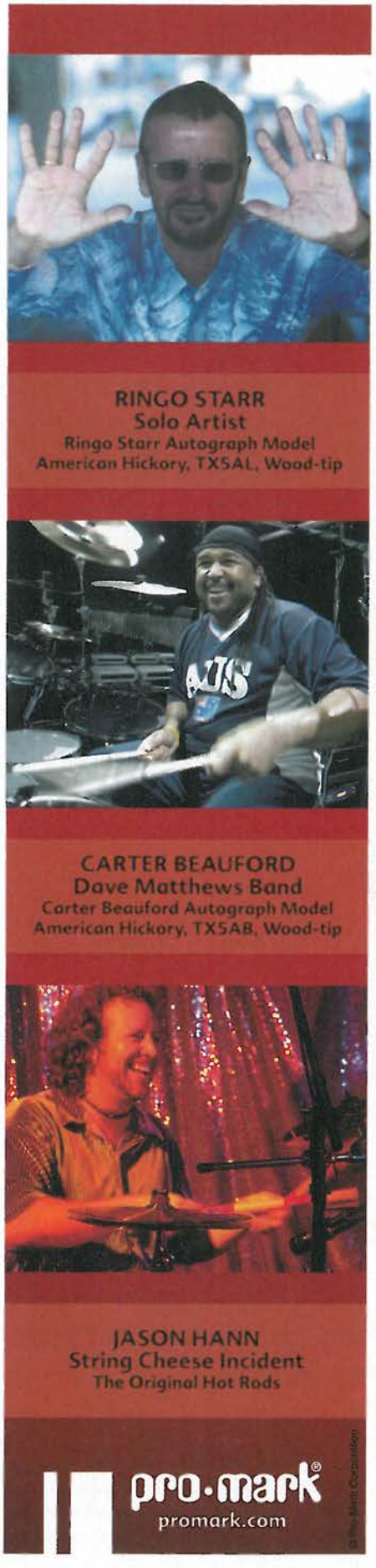
### Time

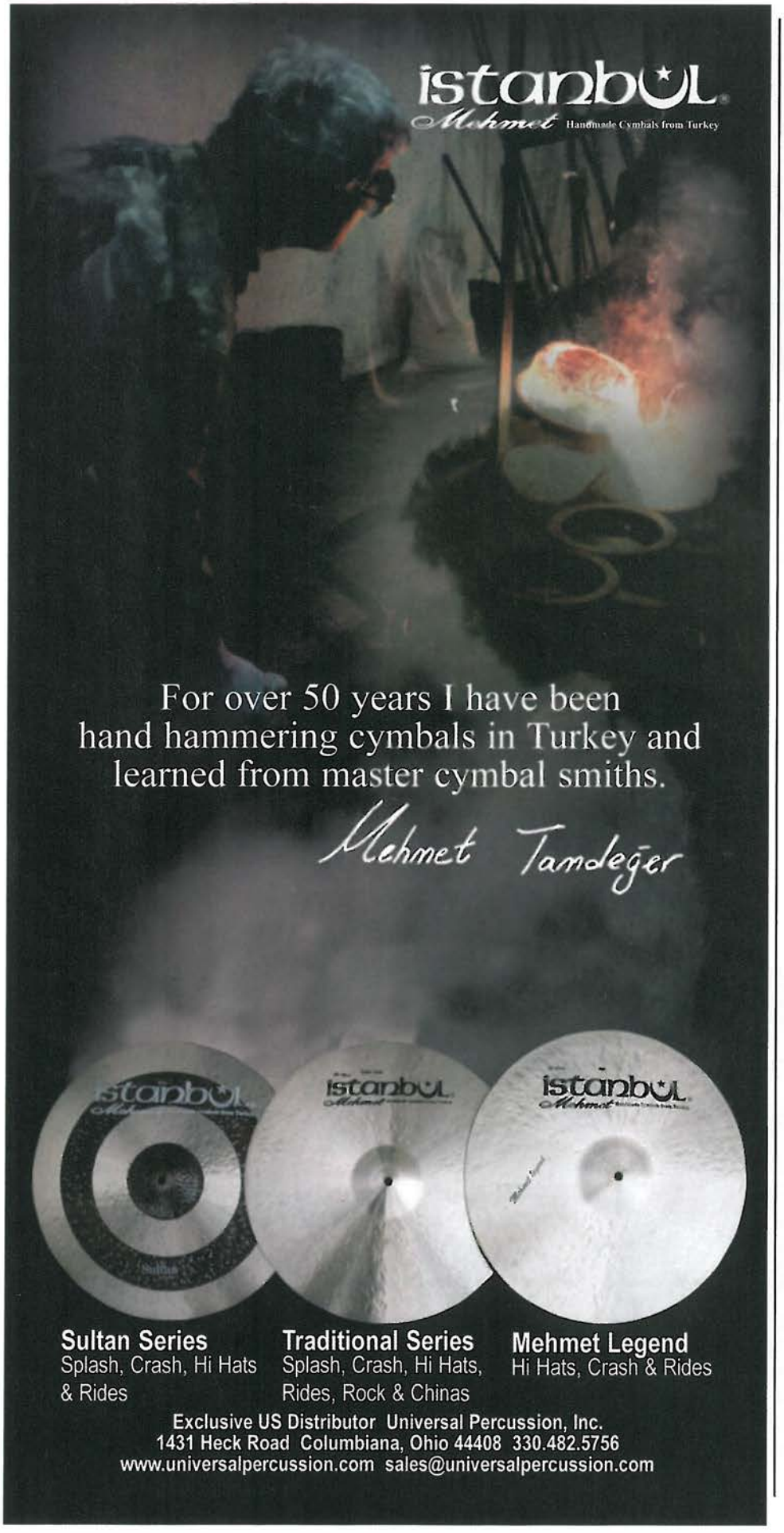
Blues is dancing music, so the beat has to be steady. Blues drumming has more breath in it than the computerized pulsations of techno dance music, but the rhythmic underpinnings are solid nonetheless. No matter what else varies, the time rarely picks up or slows down.

Perhaps the hardest thing to get right in blues drumming is this balance between being rock steady on the one hand and sounding like a breathing organism on the other. Blues is not sloppy music, but it is

William Jennings

A summit of veteran blues drummers held for a 1987 Modern Drummer story included (from left) Odie Payne, Clifton James, Fred Below, S.P. Leary, and Earl Phillips.






## Blues Drumming

supposed to be joyous (even when it's about infidelity and drunkenness). You won't hear a more solid drummer than Marty Richards. Yet listen to *Stretchin' Out Live* and try to imagine it with a drum machine. You always know there is a real person back there, and that he is loving every minute of what he's doing.

### Dynamics

While blues songs tend to have solid tempos, the dynamics can range from whisper to apocalypse. For a lesson in dynamics, check out Marty's playing on "Dyin' Flu." At some points, the tune gets so quiet you can hear the amps humming. At others, it's a full-on attack that any rock band would be proud of. Often the shifts are sudden. Without the band's attention to dynamics, this very slow song would be eleven minutes of tedium.

Dynamic changes in blues are often improvised and sudden. A soloist might build to a screeching note and then drop to a murmur. If you're staring off into space, you'll find yourself playing a drum solo that you didn't intend. A good blues drummer must always be ready to respond to the emotions of the lead player—which leads us to improvisation.

### Improvising

Blues is emotional music, and emotions are unpredictable. Despite the fact that many blues songs use the same chords and phrasing, good blues musicians always find a way to surprise you. For example, a Buddy Guy concert is not only a lesson in blues guitar but also a chance to see a band on its toes. Guy starts and stops tunes, breaks into solos, extends solos, and changes tunes—all on impulse.

Improvising in the blues can mean anything from "one more time" to launching into a new song without warning. Despite its basic chords and straight-ahead beats, the blues can call on you to dig deeply into your improv skills.

Sometimes you can learn from a band without even hearing them. One of the best live performances ever captured on video is *Stevie Ray Vaughan And Double Trouble: Live At The El Mocambo*. Drummer Chris Layton and bassist Tommy Shannon never take their eyes off of Stevie. Remember in band class when the director would scream at

*To those who have not listened closely, the blues is nothing more than a few chords, one-note solos, and scrunched-up faces. But if it's so easy to play, why does no one else sound like B.B. King?*

you to watch him? That is advice that will take you far in a volatile music like the blues.

### Snare Sound

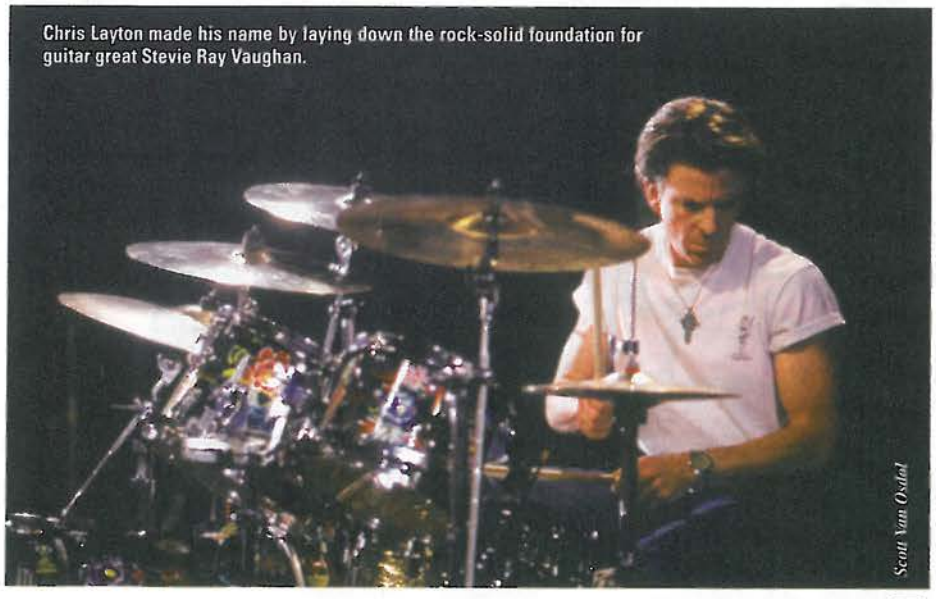
In most blues recordings, the drum sound that stands out the most is the snare. Lead players key in on the snare, and the audience dances to it. A good blues snare sound is lively and almost bell-like at higher volumes, yet must be able to convey the subtleties of softer passages. Marty Richards' snare sound on *Stretchin' Out Live* is a masterpiece in itself. It is full yet not overwhelming, warm yet powerful, and open yet controlled. It whispers and it roars, and it sounds beautiful doing both. Such a snare sound is a foundation upon which a great band can lay its chops.

Of course, there is no one right way to tune a snare drum. But as a general rule, blues snares are usually not too muffled. The top head tends to be tight to facilitate precision at low volumes, but not so tight as to rob the sound of its punch. Whatever you do, you want to avoid making a dull thud or an anemic ping. And beware the temptation to go for the dreaded arena-rock cannon explosion.

### Bringing It Together

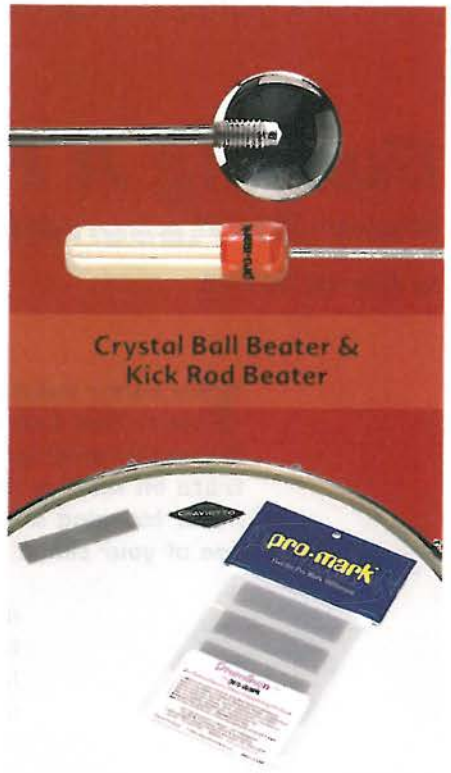
So blues drumming might not be so easy after all. I mean, let's just review all those dictums we've discussed: Play simply without being boring. Keep your time steady, but still sound human. Be ready to navigate any dynamic shift an inspired trumpet player might be in the mood to pull off. Then be with him when he decides to launch into a new song after his solo. Don't forget to make sure they can hear the snare. And it all means nothing if the turnarounds and endings aren't tight. Sheesh!

There is one thing about blues that *is* easy: knowing when you've "hit it." A blues gig is not like a classical recital. You know how the audience and the band feel. When the dance floor fills up and the trumpet player looks like he's ready to levitate, you know you're doing it right. And there is no rush like nailing a blues gig.



Chris Layton made his name by laying down the rock-solid foundation for guitar great Stevie Ray Vaughan.

Scott Van Osdol

# Building A Fan Base

## Part 3: Assembling A Team

*by Darren Pujalet*

**The music industry is a marriage of art and business. One cannot exist without the other. As a drummer, your primary goal should be to concentrate on making music. Even if you're good at business, focusing on it too much may not be the best use of your time.**

In the previous two articles of this series we discussed the touring and promotional side of building a fan base. This time we'll talk about how to put together a team so that you can free up valuable creative time and energy.

### Choosing The Players

Start by asking yourself whether or not you're definitely ready to seek professional business help. Assuming that the answer is yes, you should then create a list of team positions necessary to get the job done.

When you're looking for potential team members to fill those positions, remember that they will essentially be partners in the development of your career. So make sure that you screen for phonies and sharks. What you really want are people who are passionate about your career and/or your band's best interests. The team members you hire will determine whether you are successful or just fill a place on the "forgotten band" list.

There are many important roles to fill when assembling a solid team. The size of that team will vary depending on the size of your band and the finances you have available. In the beginning, it's important just to get some help. As your band (or your drumming career) grows, so will your team.

It's a good idea to send a copy of your press kit to prospective team members. (Creating a press kit was discussed in the October '05 *MD*.) The kit will provide information to people who may not know much about your band.

*Illustration by Joe King*

*You want people who are passionate about your career and your band's best interests.*

### The Personal Manager

Generally, the first team member to bring on board is a personal manager. A manager can lighten your load drastically, especially if you're on the road a lot. He or she will be responsible for your everyday affairs, such as making business decisions, planning the band's creative direction, obtaining record deals, and generally promoting your career. The manager may also coordinate tours and road activities. In the beginning, some managers travel with the band and handle road responsibilities as well. Ultimately, though, it's easier if they are based in one location.

The personal manager is generally considered your team captain, who will supervise all the other team members to make sure that the organization is running smoothly. Usually, he or she becomes a liaison between you and the outside business world. A good manager is someone you can trust to handle your career effectively. Check out *All You Need To Know About The Music Business* by Donald S. Passman for more on this subject.

### The Booking Agent

A booking agent can help facilitate getting you out on the road. He or she can get you gigs, route your tours, and package you with other bands that may already have a following. In addition, an agent may negotiate higher fees for your band, request the venue to make a down payment on the show, take care of contracts, and chase down any money that is owed to you by a promoter. Agents usually charge 10% of the gross income from a show they have booked. If they do their job properly, it's more than worth it.

Being represented by a reputable agent (or agency) can add credibility to a band—especially if the band is relatively unknown. Particle started with Shanktime booking in the beginning, but graduated to a higher-profile agency as the band grew. There are agencies for bands at every level.

### The Attorney

At some point in your career you will be asked to sign a contract or be involved in other legal matters. Trust me, you *will* need a good lawyer. In addition, lawyers can sometimes get your music to the right people. Many have built relationships with key members of the music industry—people you want to hear your music.

### The Business Manager

A business manager and/or accountant may not be necessary right away, simply because you may not be making enough money to justify their involvement. But as your finances become more intricate, their help will be essential. They are responsible for taking care of a band or a solo artist's bills, for drafting budgets, for figuring taxes, and so forth.

Again, this is a situation where you want to employ someone who you can trust. Even so, you'll still want to keep tabs on his or her

operations. We've all heard the stories of rock stars who made millions but wound up destitute due to poor financial management.

### The Publicist And Street Team

In our previous installment we spoke in detail about the importance of having a publicist and a street team. A publicist's role is to help get your name in the press and to keep you on the minds of potential fans.

The street team will help you facilitate promotional activities in cities before you arrive for the show. These are the people who aid in getting the buzz out on the street. They are usually loyal fans as well. This unit can be a very valuable and cost-effective addition to your team.

### The Road Crew

As your touring schedule becomes more intense, it will help to hire a road crew to help set up gear, drive the equipment vehicles, run sound, manage road finances, and do any other job that's required in order to get the show running smoothly and on time. Eventually, one of those crew members will be a drum tech, who will set up, break down, and maintain your drums. (Yay!)

The road crew is actually a sub-team in itself, and it's usually headed up by a road manager or tour manager. This is another key position on your overall team. The road manager will likely stay in close communication with the personal manager, and will generally act as overall coordinator and troubleshooter when you're on tour.

The road crew members, like your bandmates, are people you will be spending a lot of time with. So it's in your best interest to find people with whom you can get along.

### Final Thoughts

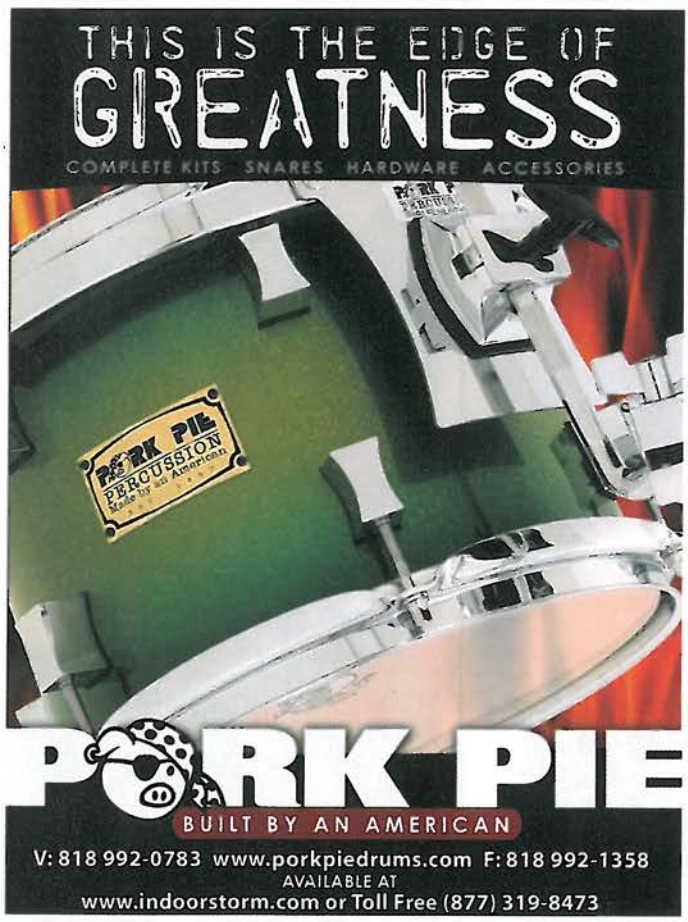
When hiring new team members, you can start by asking people in the music business for referrals or suggestions. Also try Billboard.com or Galaris.com, or do a Google search to locate people who can help. Just be certain that you *need* to hire a new member at any given point. Building a team that you can't support will bog you down.

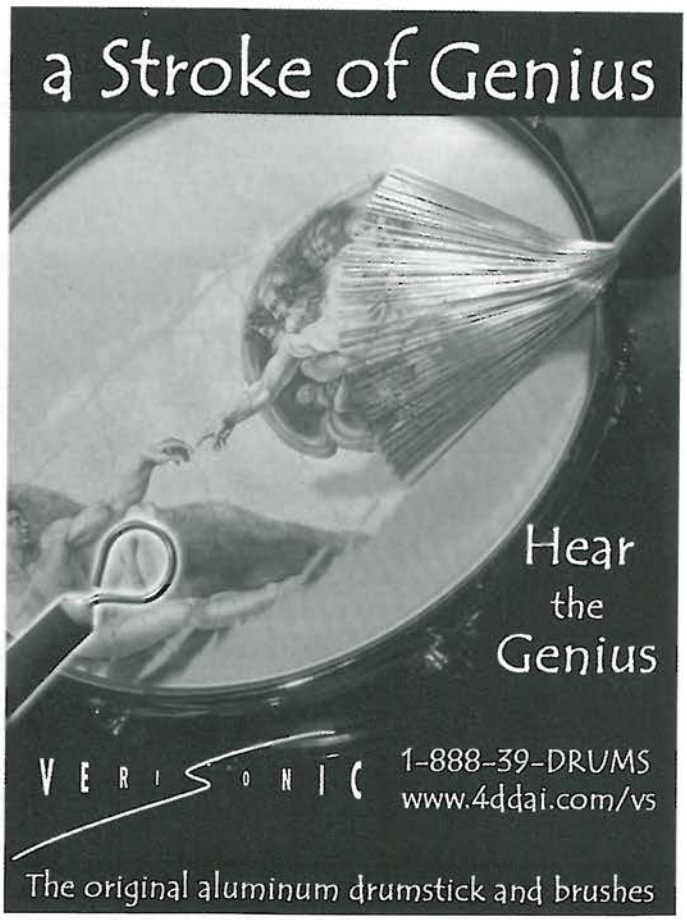
It's very important to make sure your team is well organized. Having well-defined job descriptions will help enormously, as will hiring people who are passionate about your music. There is no letter I in "team." A good team works together for the growth of everyone's career.

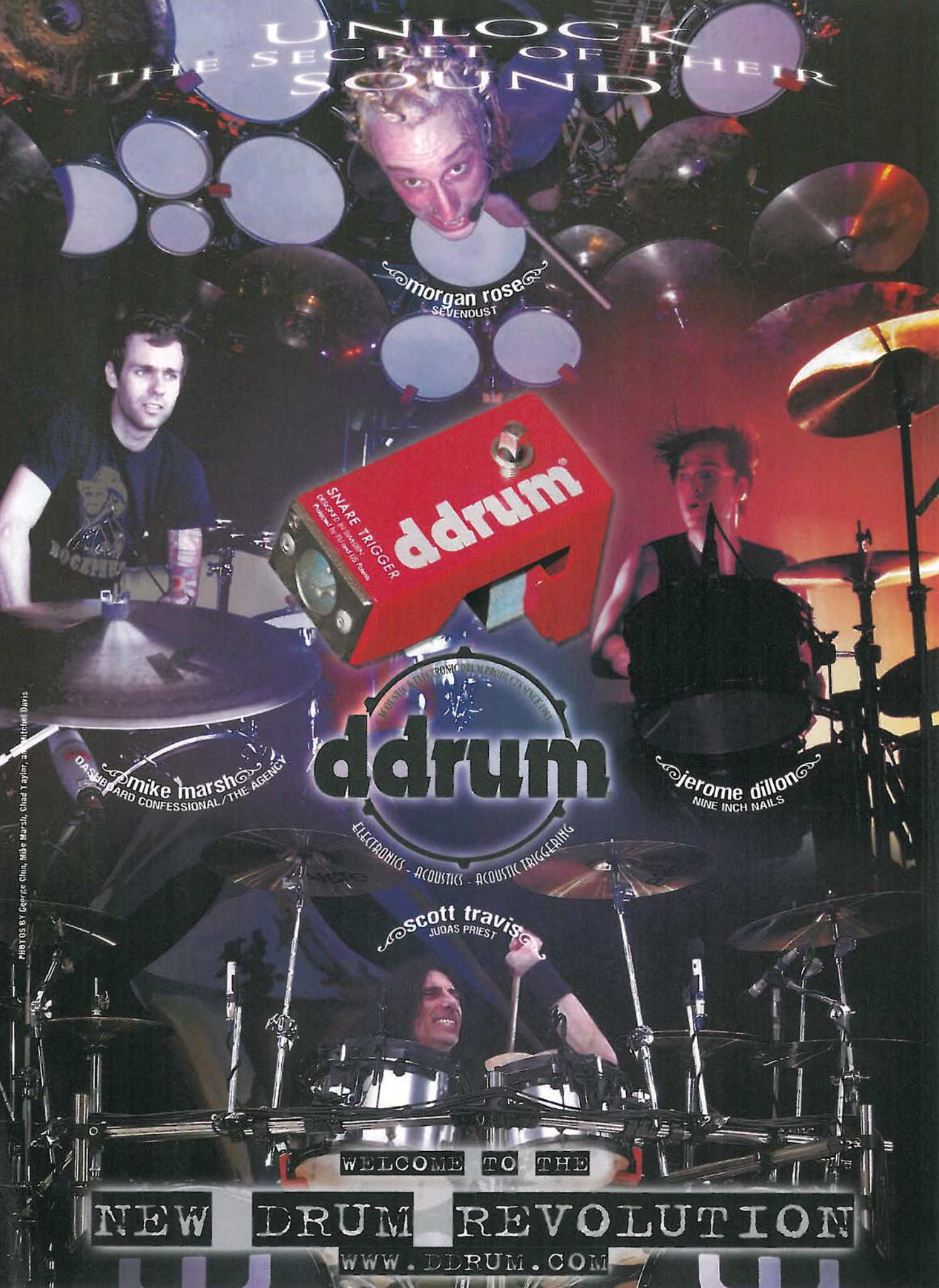
In this series we've discussed the value of touring, promotion, and assembling a proper team when it comes to building a fan base before putting out an album. Drummers can play an integral role in this process. A good musician maintains an appropriate balance between music and business. No skyscraper has ever stood the test of time without a solid foundation. If you build it, they will come!

*Darren Pujalet is the rhythmic pulse behind the band Particle. The pioneering electronic/jam-rock instrumental quartet has played*

*over five hundred shows around the world, including some of the nation's biggest festivals. Their 2004 debut CD,* Launchpad, *was hailed by the Associated Press as one of that year's top ten recordings. More information is available at www.particlepeople.com.*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# Funk

## Ten Indispensable Long-Players

*by Jeff Schaller*

One could argue that no music form highlights the drummer more than funk. The fat grooves, the dirty backbeats, the snap of a tight snare, the syncopated hits with a stellar horn section, the deep pocket against a smooth bass line...you're probably groovin' in your seat just thinking about it. Funk music is all about the beat, and it's no coincidence that many of our most influential drummers have made a name for themselves playing the style. If you want to learn the essence of the style, here are ten classic albums you should *definitely* check out.

## various
### Hard Texas Funk 1968–1975 (Jazzman)

Jazzman Records sought out twenty-one super rare and previously unreleased cuts made between 1968 and 1975 and successfully compiled the definitive anthology of *Texas Funk*. These tracks are über rare and about as gritty as you'll find anywhere. The drumming is right in your face and is highlighted all over this CD. Although soul towns like Philadelphia and Detroit got most of the hype, the drummers deep in the heart of Texas could lay it down like nobody's business.

## sharon jones
### Dap Dippin' With Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings (Daptone)
**Homer Steinweiss**

In the late '90s a new breed of funk bands emerged on the scene that captured the '60s sound so well, you almost can't tell it's new music. The absolute best of these groups is New York's Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings. The grooves fit the songs so perfectly it's insane. Drummer Homer "Funky Foot" Steinweiss has not only a funky foot but a sick left hand and a big fat sound. The beat for "Pick It Up, Lay It In The Cut" is one of the absolute funkiest new jams to come around in years.

## the J.B. s
### Pass The Peas (Polydor)
**John "Jabo" Starks**

The J.B.'s are basically the James Brown band minus their famous leader. Fred Wesley, Maceo Parker, "Jabo" Starks, and the gang deliver some relentless funk on this collection, and prove that they're the groove that made the booty move behind Mr. Brown. This stuff is as exciting and powerful as anything you can find from the heyday of soul.

## sly & the family stone
### Anthology (Epic)
**Greg Errico**

*Anthology* is simply one of the best hits collections of all time. From the mid-tempo grooves of "Everyday People" to the frenetic energy of "Dance To The Music," Sly & The Family Stone always had that deep soulful pocket, courtesy of drummer Greg Errico. If you can find any of the band's live bootlegs, pick them up to hear just how much Errico stretched the band in a live context. An unsung hero in the genre.

## parliament
### Mothership Connection (Casablanca)
**Jerome Brailey**

It's a toss-up between this album and *One Nation Under A Groove*. Either way you slice it, Parliament laid down some seriously groovy stuff. Their sound was always evolving, but no matter what they sounded like at any given time, P-Funk (which included several ex-JB musicians) personified funk music in the '70s. Some of the drum

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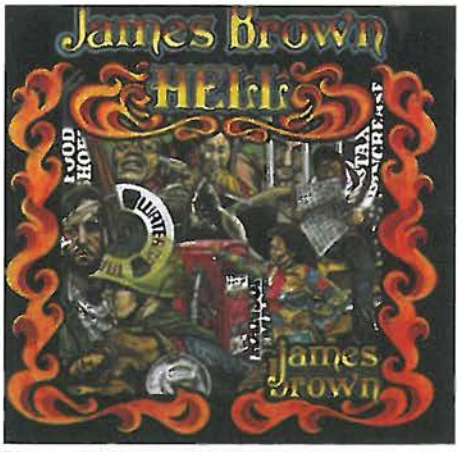
## Essential Listening

patterns were quite simple and bare. In a way, though, this is what made them so interesting: They remained incredibly funky for extended periods of time, even without the flash.

### Various
**Hitsville USA: The Motown Singles Collection 1959–1971** (Motown)
Richard "Pistol" Allen, Uriel Jones, Benny Benjamin

This collection features over one hundred songs from the greatest era of music ever, including Stevie Wonder, The Temptations, Edwin Starr, Marvin Gaye, Rare Earth, and The Jackson 5. Although Motown artists were more soul than straight-up funk, all of their albums and singles featured the legendary Funk Brothers studio band. The group's style evolved into a very funky sound, particularly between the mid '60s and the early '70s, when producers like Norman Whitfield came into the fold. Take a listen to a song like Edwin Starr's "Twenty-Five Miles" (played by Uriel Jones), and you'll be amazed. This dynamic trio of stickmen could lay it down deeper and tastier than just about anyone, and between them they represent three of the most influential beat-keepers of all time. Their moniker couldn't have been more appropriate.

### James Brown
**Hell** (Polydor)
John "Jabo" Starks




If you have the money, pick up the *Star Time* box set. It's a monster collection that spans several decades, and it features all of James Brown's great drummers. If

you don't have big cash, though, this beauty from '74 is as fine a place as any to start your James Brown journey. *Hell* was released in the middle of Brown's career, and although it isn't laced with tons of hits, it does feature some incredibly tight and funky drumming courtesy of "Jabo" Starks. The rimclick pattern in the chorus of "Papa Don't Take No Mess" is responsible for the author's love of funk music—tight, tasty, and what an *unbelievable* snare sound.

## The Meters

**The Meters** (Sundazed)

**Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste**

One of the most influential funk bands of all time, The Meters featured the incomparable Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste on drums. Zig and bassist George Porter Jr. comprised one of the most inventive rhythm sections of the late '60s. The band's first three albums featured some of

their best work, and this one, their 1969 debut, is considered a must-have. Put this thing on at a party, and everyone will be on their feet. This New Orleans–based band influenced everyone from James Brown to George Clinton to Galactic and beyond. Not only are the beats snappy and tight, they're pretty darned tricky to replicate. What's more, the drums on these records sound perfect—a bit distant, dry, and tight. These guys were the kings.

## various

**The Funky 16 Corners**

(Stones Throw)

Here's a new compilation of out-of-print funk 45s from the late '60s/early '70s. The songs will be unfamiliar to most, but this is absolutely one of the dirtiest, grittiest col-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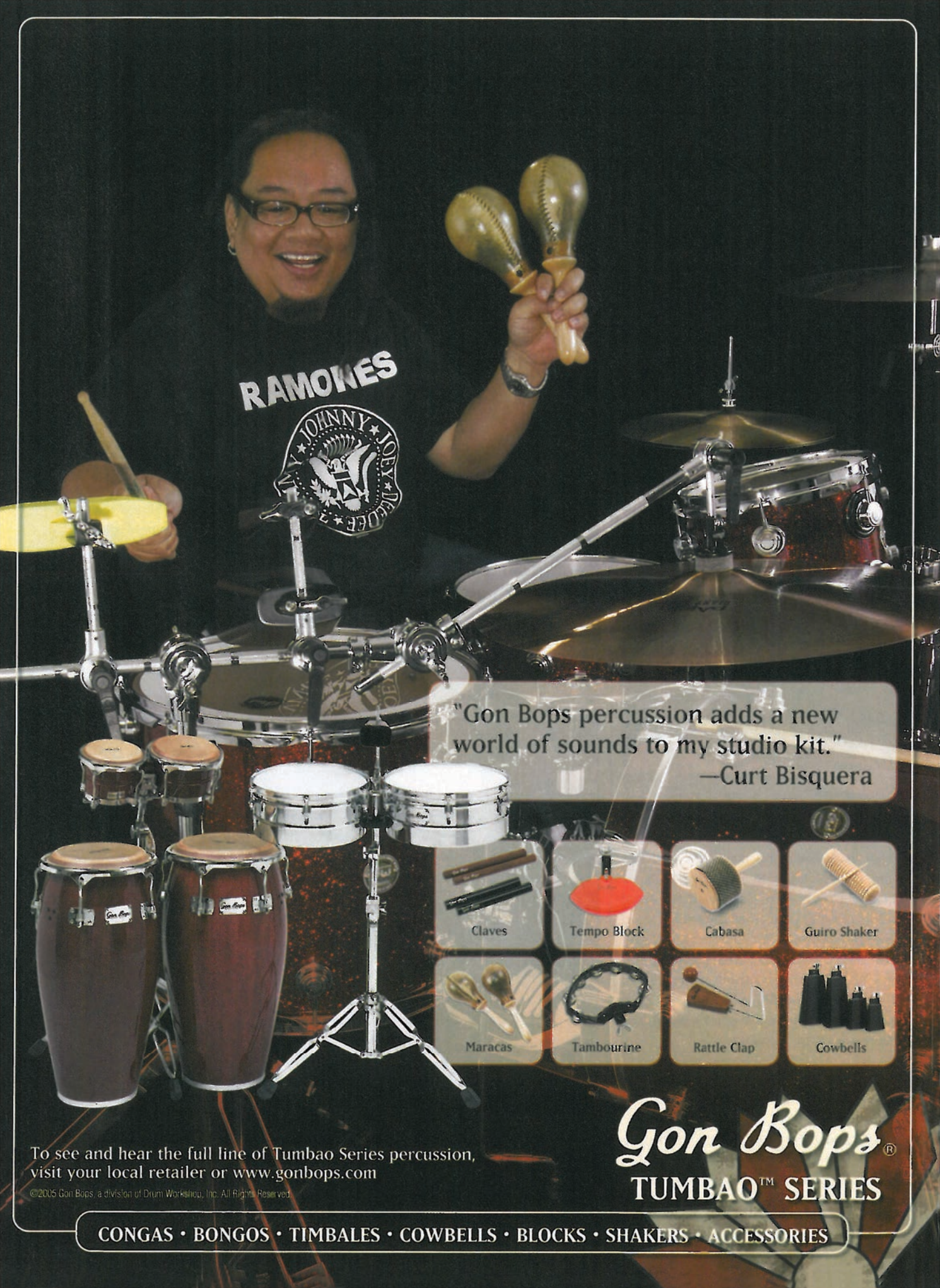
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**Poets of Rhythm**
**Discern/Define** (Quannum Projects)

**Supaman 3**
**Pure Cane Sugar** (Deptone)

**The O'Jays**
**Back Stabbers** (Epic)

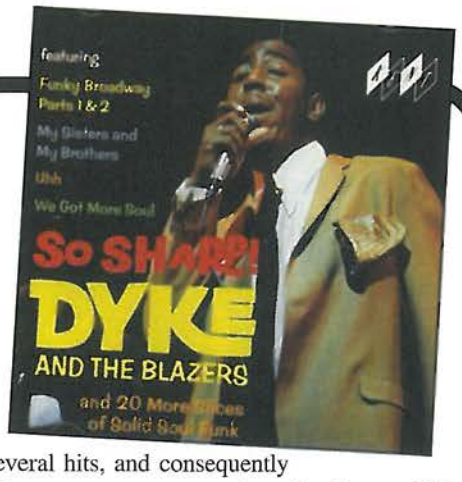
**The Isley Brothers**
**3+3** (T-Neck)

**Edwin Starr**
**War & Peace** (Motown)

MD Radio

**To hear some of the artists mentioned in *Essential Listening*, go to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com.**

lections of fat beats put together on one album. Numerous break beats, incredibly filthy and thick patterns... unlike any other compilation, *Funky 16 Corners* captures the essence of late '60s and early '70s raw funk. A must-have for every drummer.




### Dyke & The Blazers
**So Sharp!** (Kent)
**James Gadson**

Dyke & The Blazers formed in Buffalo, New York in the late '60s and got their start as the backup band for The O'Jays. At the time they were considered the funkiest thing next to James Brown. In fact, they were the first band to feature the term "funk" in a song. They scored several hits, and consequently inspired every band that followed. The grooves were put down by former Bill Withers drummer James Gadson, who had a warmer sound than his James Brown rivals Clyde Stubblefield and Jabo Starks. But James was equally tight and brutally funky. Listen closely to this collection of their best cuts, and you'll notice that the break beat in the middle of "Funky Broadway" sounds similar to "Cold Sweat." Sadly, lead singer Arlester Christian was gunned down in 1971 at the height of the band's success.

*Jeff Schaller is a Buffalo-based drummer and funk DJ. He's recently recorded with Last Days Of Radio, Humphrey, Any December, Enemies Only, Scott Celani, and his own funk project, Wholesale Dynamite. He can be reached at downbeat@adelphia.net.*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## A Bright Idea

### Meinl Soundcaster Custom Series

Meinl's new Soundcaster Custom series feature a brilliant finish applied to the original Soundcaster B12 alloy. The new cymbals are said to have the "rich full sound" of the original Soundcasters, but with "an enhanced element of sheen and vibrant purpose."

Soundcaster Customs are designed to produce a cutting, glassy, yet warm tone that's recommended for heavy metal, punk, hard rock, country, and pop applications. List prices range from $149 for an 8" splash to $515 for a 22" Mega Bell ride.

**(615) 227-5090, www.meinlcymbals.com.**

## Mass Appeal

### Vic Firth HD4 And HD9 Drumsticks

Vic Firth has added two new drumstick models—HD4 and HD9—to their American Classic hickory series. Both models originated in the all-maple American Custom series, and are now offered in the American Classic series for drummers who prefer the extra weight and durability of hickory sticks.

HD4

HD9

The HD4 is said to offer a light touch and a great feel around the drums. It measures $15^{7}/_{8}$" long and .530" in diameter. The HD9 is popular with players who love a 5B but want a little more weight and length. It measures $16^{1}/_{4}$" long and .610" in diameter. Both models list for $12 per pair.

**(781) 326-3455, www.vicfirth.com.**

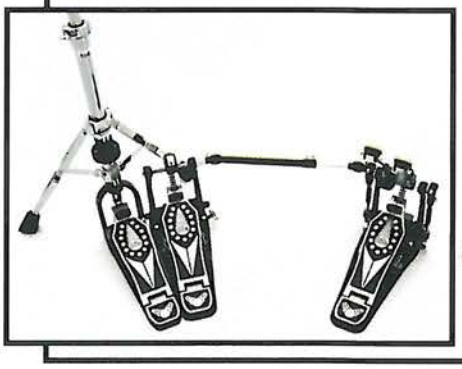
## Let's Hear It For The Bipeds

### Taye HH6020 Two-Legged Hi-Hat Stand

Taye's new HH6020 two-leg hi-hat stand is designed to offer solid stability and variable positioning without extra bulk. The footboard baseplate is exceptionally small to allow close positioning of other pedals, and the legs swivel to any position for optimum stability.

According to Taye, the HH6020 is the smallest heavy-duty hi-hat stand in the business and can fold up for easy transport, yet is remarkably stable. It assembles via a snap-in, snap-out base plate with just an easy turn of a wing nut, and carries an estimated street price of $130.

**(909) 628-9589, www.tayedrums.com.**



# Expand Your Palette

## Mapex Adds Colors To M Birch Line

Mapex USA has added two new transparent lacquer colors to its M Birch drumkit series. Transparent Purple and Transparent Emerald Green have been added to the original Transparent Cherry, Amber, and Sapphire finishes.

M-Birch drumshells are constructed entirely of birch plies with an exterior maple veneer that provides a beautiful grain pattern, enhancing the transparent lacquer finish. Five-piece M-Birch kits (in five configurations) carry a list price of $1,199.99, including a double-braced 500 series Performing Artist Hardware package and a throne. Throughout 2005, consumers purchasing any five-piece Studio, Fusion, Fusionease, or Jazz kit will receive a free matching 8" tom. Purchasers of a five-piece Standard kit will receive a free 10" tom. All free add-on toms will be equipped with a TH684 tom arm and an AC901 multiclamp.

**(615) 793-2050, www.mapexdrums.com.**

# Added Leverage

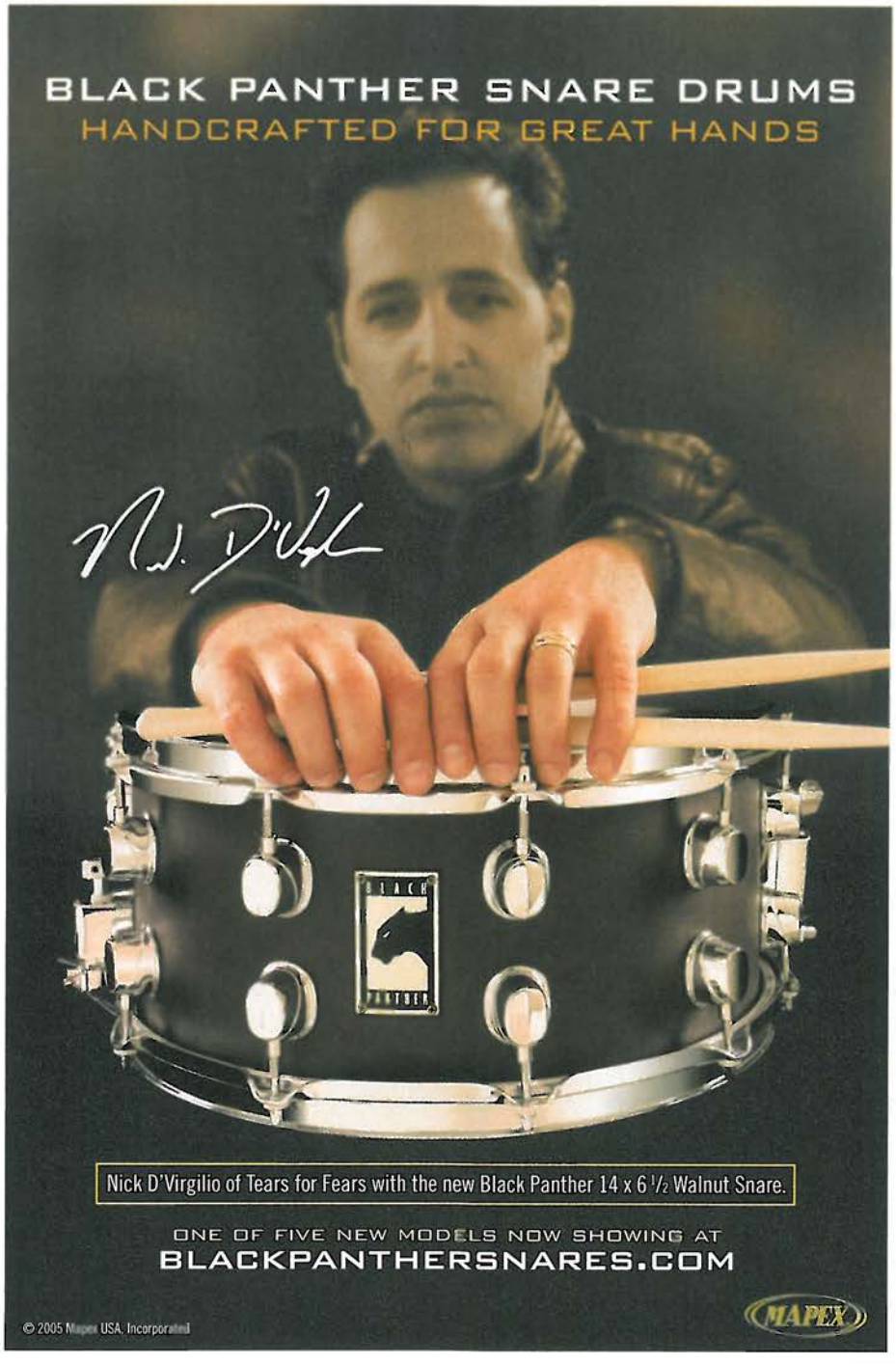
## Dunnett R Class Snare Throw-Off

The new R Class throw-off from Dunnett Classic drums is designed to set a new standard for reliability, simplicity, and advanced ergonomics. It features all-metal die-cast construction for maximum durability, as well as a release lever that can be rotated 180° relative to the drumshell. A friction tension system prevents the lever from movements caused by vibrations. The all-chrome finish ties in well with other chrome fittings on the snare drum. Black and brass finishes will be added later this year.

The R Class throw-off incorporates a unique mounting channel that allows it to be retrofitted to any drum with a vertical hole pattern of $1\frac{3}{4}$" or less. A matching die-cast butt end is also available.

Registered owners of 2005 Dunnett Classic snare drums are eligible for a no-charge upgrade to the R Class throw-off. Registered owners of 2004 and earlier models can upgrade for a nominal charge. The R Class throw-off will be retailed for after-market purchases as a Gibraltar component at a list price of $70. Drum manufacturers and OEMs can purchase the unit directly from Dunnett.

**(604) 639-6782, www.dunnett.com.**



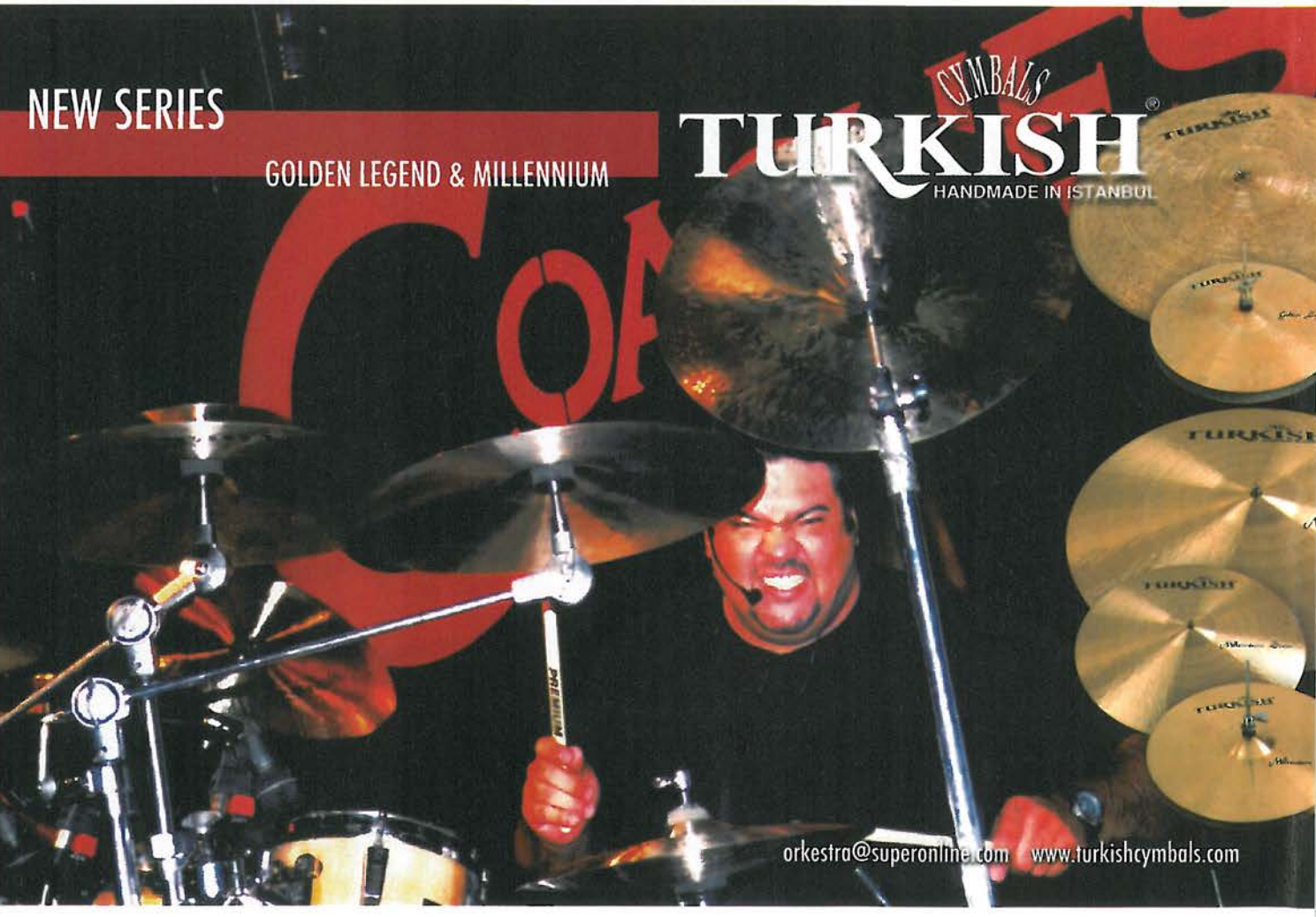
## A Dangling Particymbal

### Serpent Cymbals Sidewinder 17

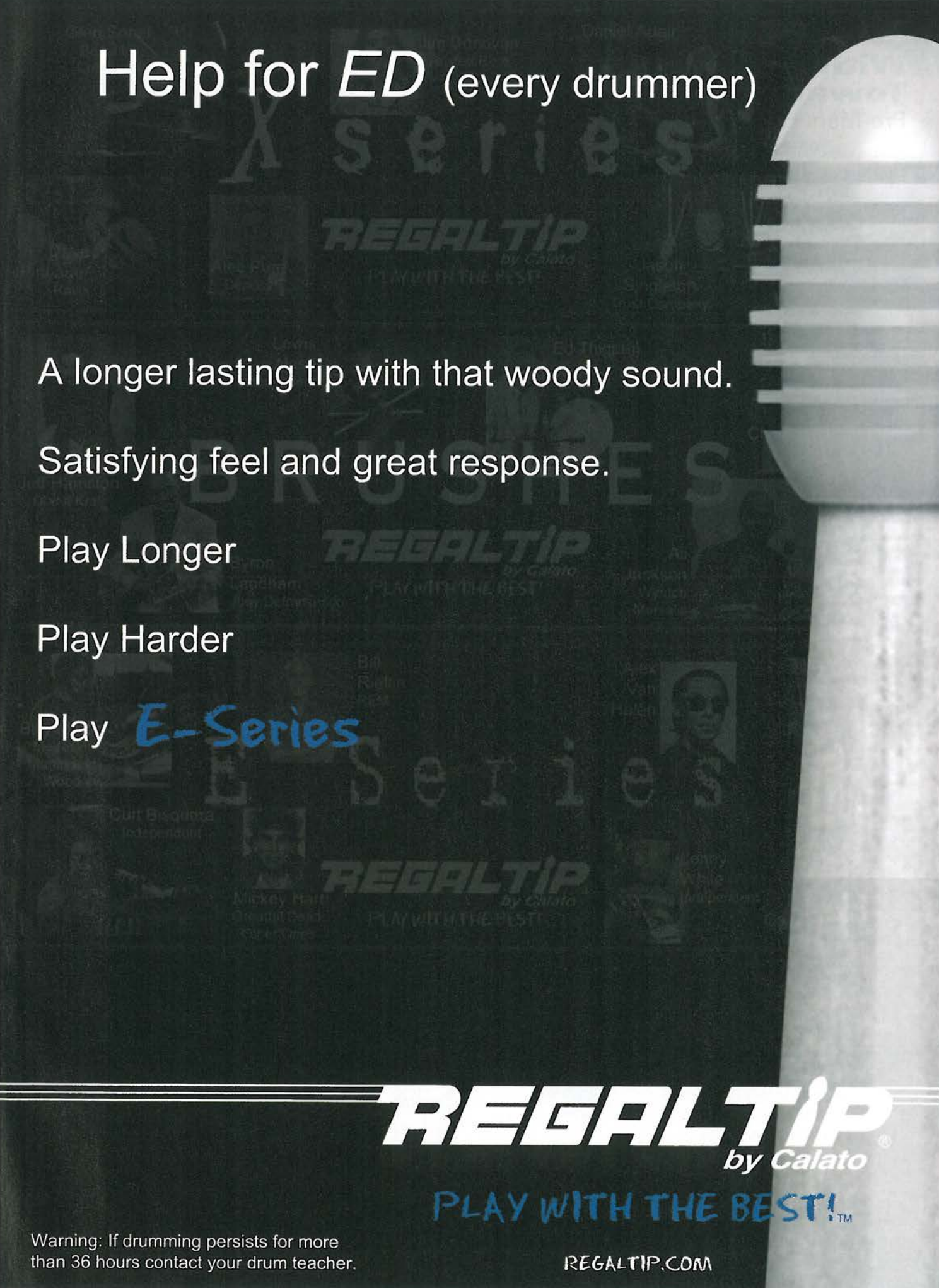
Serpent Cymbals offers a special effects cymbal that features a radical design and sound. The Sidewinder 17 is a 17" hand-hammered B20 bronze cymbal made to designer/drummer Steve Croteau's specifications, then cut using an industrial water cutter with 60,000 lbs. of water pressure. The resulting instrument hangs down in a serpentine shape (hence the company name) and is not for the faint of heart.

According to Croteau, the Sidewinder 17 "sounds like a cross between a China cymbal, a crash cymbal, a gong, and a thunder sheet—with a stick of dynamite tossed in for fun." Typical applications would include drumset, hand percussion, symphonic, and percussion ensembles. The Sidewinder 17 lists for $265. Other models and sizes are due to follow.

**(509) 535-8131, www.serpentcymbals.com.**



# Help for *ED* (every drummer)

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### Pro-Mark Hanging Mallet Bag

Pro-Mark's new HMB1 Hanging Mallet Bag is designed specifically to hang flat and flush from any mallet keyboard instrument. It has eight extra-large inside pockets for quick mallet changes, and a roomy outside compartment for carrying music or other necessities. The bag is designed with extra padding for the protection of valuable mallets, is made of durable, water-resistant cordura, and features a rugged zipper and a comfortable, removable, padded shoulder strap. It carries a list price of $69.95.

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## Striking Out On Their Own

### Los Cabos Drumsticks

Los Cabos is the name of a new drumstick brand that promises the quality and value of the bigger brand names at prices that reflect the smaller, personalized nature of its hands-on production process. Founder Larry Guay has extensive experience in the selection and turning of quality woods for drumsticks, having produced high-quality blanks for some of the industry's leading stick makers in the USA, Canada, and Europe. The company uses grade-A Canadian maple and American hickory to create its six model lines.

Los Cabos is based in eastern Canada, and the drumstick launch was inspired by the success of the nearby Sabian Cymbal Company. Initial retail sales will be in Canada, but interested US drummers can contact the company directly for purchases.

**(506) 460-8352, www.loscabosdrumsticks.com.**

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# New Tools Of The Trade

## Zildjian Matt Sorum Artist Series Sticks, John Riley Double Stick/Mallets, Trigger Sticks, and Bent Bristle Brushes

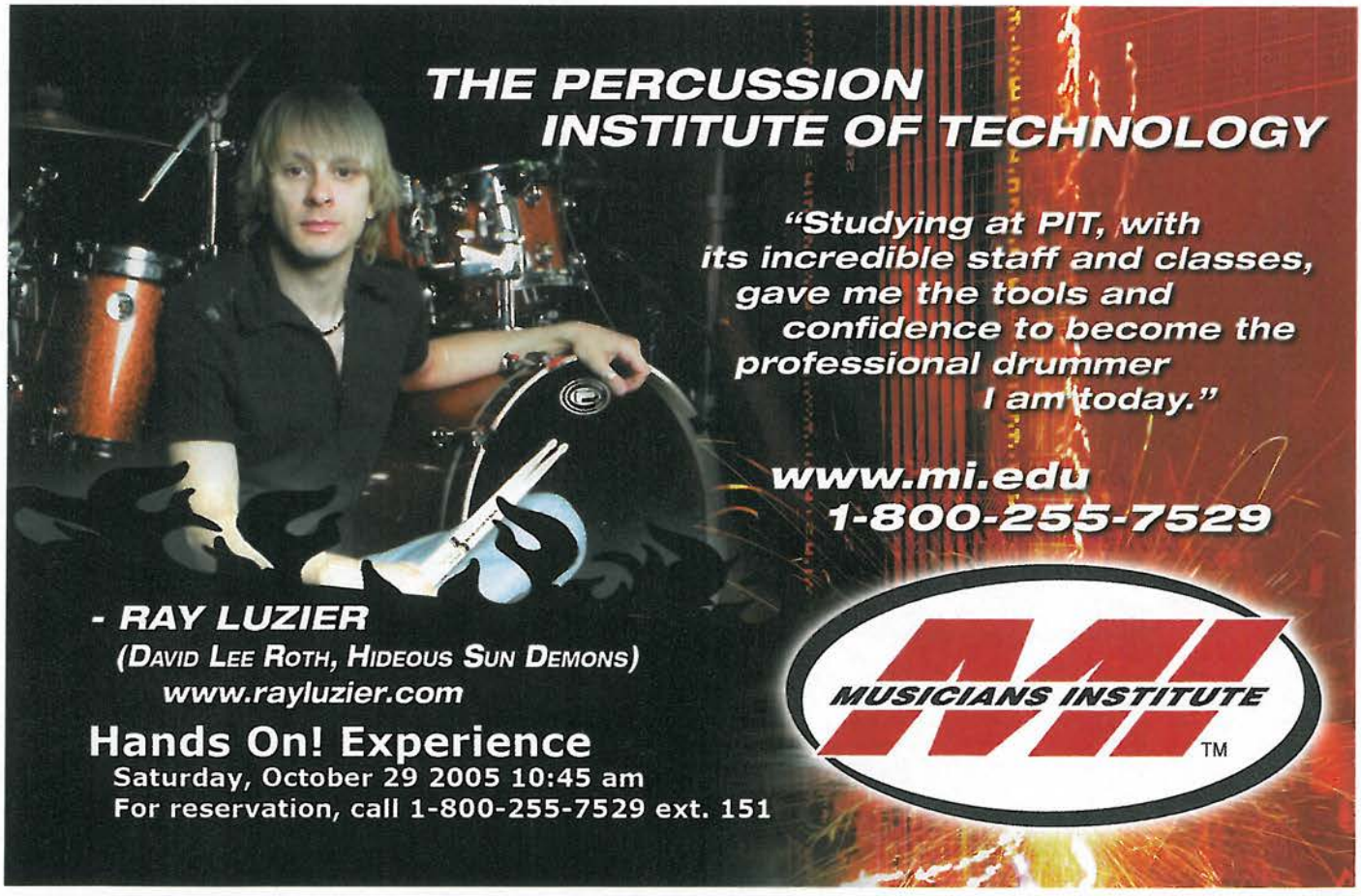
Zildjian's drumstick division has been hard at work developing four new models. To begin with, Velvet Revolver drummer Matt Sorum has worked with Zildjian to modify the look and feel of his Artist Series stick. The new design combines the $16\frac{5}{8}$" length of Zildjian's Rock model and the .595" diameter of their Super 5B with a barrel-shaped wood bead for producing powerful tones. The drumstick also now features the Velvet Revolver logo above Matt's name, both in a brilliant red. The hickory sticks list for $14.40 per pair.

Also new in the Artist series is the John Riley Double, a stick-mallet combo designed with popular jazz drummer John Riley. The design combines the acorn bead of Riley's Artist series drumstick and Zildjian's popular seamless felt mallet head. The hickory stick is $16\frac{1}{4}$" long and .550" in diameter. In addition to drum-set playing, it's said to be ideal for cymbal swells and muted tom fills. List price is $29.95 per pair.

The latest addition to Zildjian's Anti-Vibe series is the Trigger Stick, designed primarily for use on electronic pads. It features Zildjian's vibration dampening technology (contained within the butt end of the stick) for maximum comfort and control. The hickory Trigger Stick features full-sized dimensions for comfort, with a short taper down to a small round bead for pinpoint accuracy. List price is $19.50 per pair.

Finally, Zildjian's new Bent Bristle brush was designed with drummer Russ Miller to produce innovative sounds that can cut through amplified music while retaining true brush qualities. The bent-bristle design allows for two distinctively different tonalities. The bristles can be positioned facing downward for maximum articulation, or positioned flat on the head for extra-full tones due to the high amount of surface contact area. The fully retractable Bent Bristle brush also features a copper band on the butt-end to allow for bright, metallic effects on instruments, along with full crash sounds on cymbals. The rubber handles ensure a comfortable and secure grip. List price is $34.95 per pair.

**(781) 871-2200, www.zildjian.com.**

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## And They Play With The Box

### Nino Cajons

Kids are legendary for playing with the box that a gift came in. In this case, the gift (of music) *is* the box. Nino cajons are scaled-down versions of the classic Latin American percussion instrument that's played by a person sitting on it. Though designed for children, the cajons may also prove appealing to professional players seeking a different yet authentic sound.

Nino cajons are made primarily of rubber wood. One model features a front plate of ash ($149), while the other has a front plate of makah-burl wood ($169). Both feature a built-in sizzle effect and anti-slipping sitting surfaces.

**(615) 227-5090, www.meinlpercussion.com.**

## Give The Drummers Some...Sound

### Beyerdynamic Opus Series Percussion Mic's

Beyerdynamic's new Opus microphone series focuses on accurately capturing the inflection and dynamics of drums and other percussive-type instruments.

The Opus 88 condenser is said to be ideal for miking snares and toms. The microphone clamp is equipped with an integrated pre-amp that yields a frequency response of 30–20,000 Hz. The capsule is mounted on a short gooseneck that allows optimum positioning.

The Opus 99 dynamic has been developed especially for miking bass drums. Its strong neodymium magnet system and a mass-reduced diaphragm give the microphone a powerful reproduction within its 30-18,000 Hz frequency range. The hypercardioid polar pattern helps eliminate feedback in live applications. The microphone is said to operate at very high sound pressure levels without loss of sound quality and virtually no distortion.

The Opus 51 is a boundary mic' suitable for use inside kick drums. The Opus 53 is a back-electret condenser with a short design that allows flexible and unobtrusive positioning. Its frequency response of 30–20,000 Hz is particularly useful for miking snare drums and hi-hats. The Opus 83 is a studio condenser with a frequency response of 40–20,000 Hz combined with a slight proximity effect. Its cardioid polar characteristics are said to be similar to those of higher-priced studio microphones.

Opus mic's are available in various drum packs that range in price from $649 to $2,149. All microphones in the Opus Series offer a generous list of optional mountings, XLR cables of varying lengths, and microphone stands.

**(631) 293-3200, www.beyerdynamic-usa.com.**

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Visit www.montrealmusicshow.com for schedule details.

**>>> Saturday, November 12 <<<**
(11 am to 7 pm)

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**DAFNIS PRIETO & BAND (Cuba)**
*LP, Zildjian, Yamaha, Evans*

**MAGELLA CORMIER (Canada)**
*Mapex, Sabian*

**ROBBY AMEEN (New York)**
*Pearl, Sabian, Vater*

**BENNY GREB (Germany)**
*Sonor, Meinl, Beyerdynamic, Pro-Mark*

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# They Come In All Shapes And Sizes

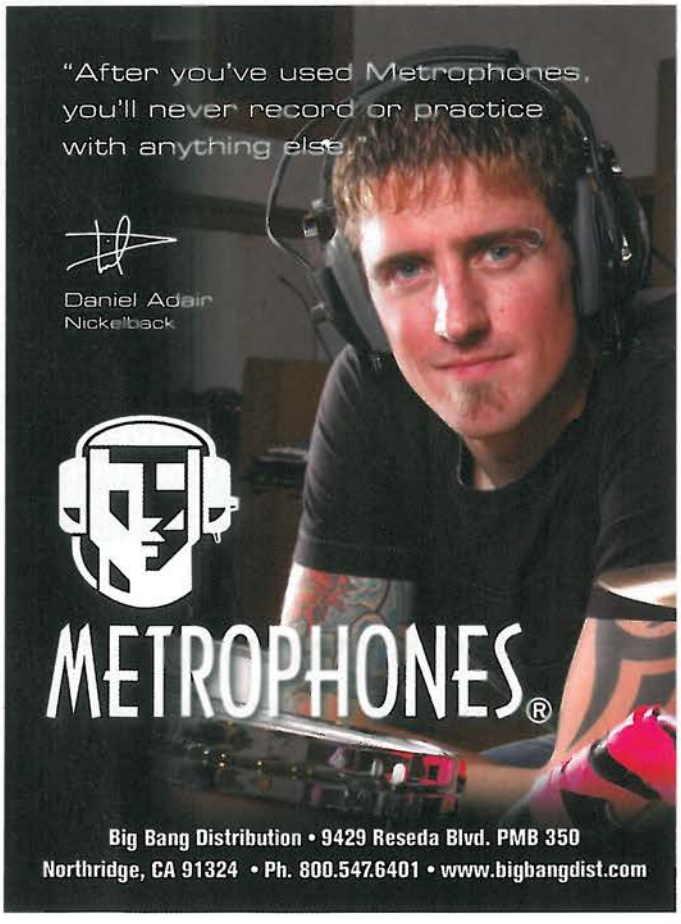
## Zildjian K Constantinople Flat Rides And 13" Hi-Hats

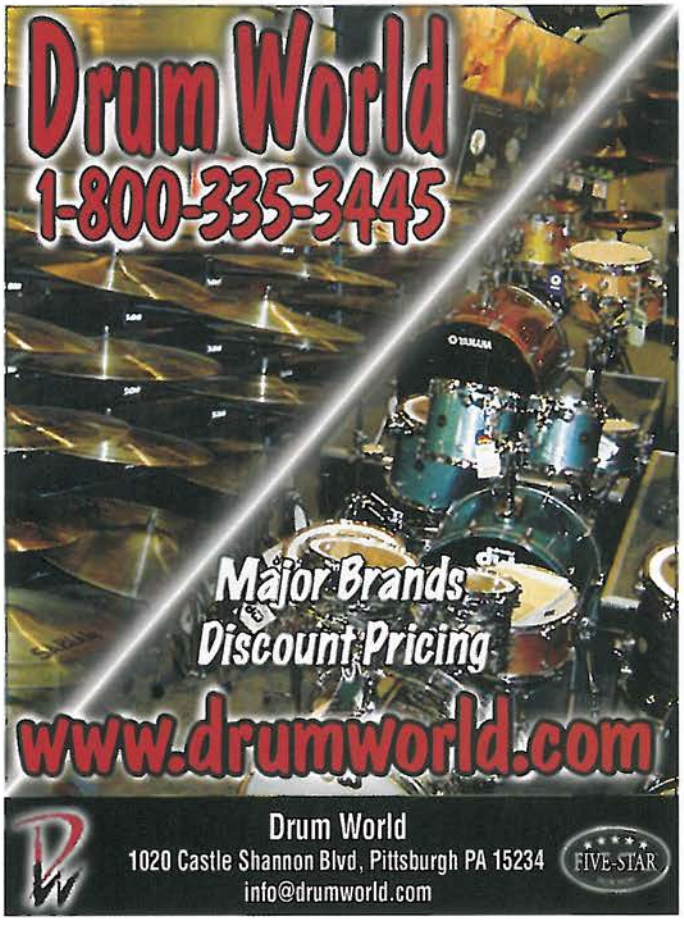
Zildjian has added 20" and 22" Flat rides and 13" hi-hats to their line of ultra-traditional K Constantinople cymbals, which are hand-lathed by skilled artisans using old-style cutting tools. Pits and other surface impurities that modern finishing processes remove are retained, preserving the original tonal quality.

The new rides bring a darker flat ride sound to the K Constantinople line of cymbals. The flat design and thin weight are said to deliver an open yet clear ride sound with extreme stick articulation. Prototypes were developed specifically for consumer feedback at the 2004 PASIC show in Louisville, Kentucky and on the 2005 Steve Gadd Clinic Tour. Several Zildjian artists also tested the final design of the rides on their regular gigs before the official release. The 20" Flat ride lists for $612; the 22" size is priced at $723.

Also new to the K Constantinople line are 13" hi-hats. Their smaller size offers a higher-pitched and more controlled sound than that of the original 14" model. The 13" hi-hats are said to be "soft, delicate, and subtle without being mushy, and to have an ultra-warm and dark sound (including a dry, warm "chick" ideal for acoustic jazz and studio work). Pairs are offered in matched thin and medium weights, or in medium/thin combinations. List price is $348 per pair.

**(781) 871-2200, www.zildjian.com.**

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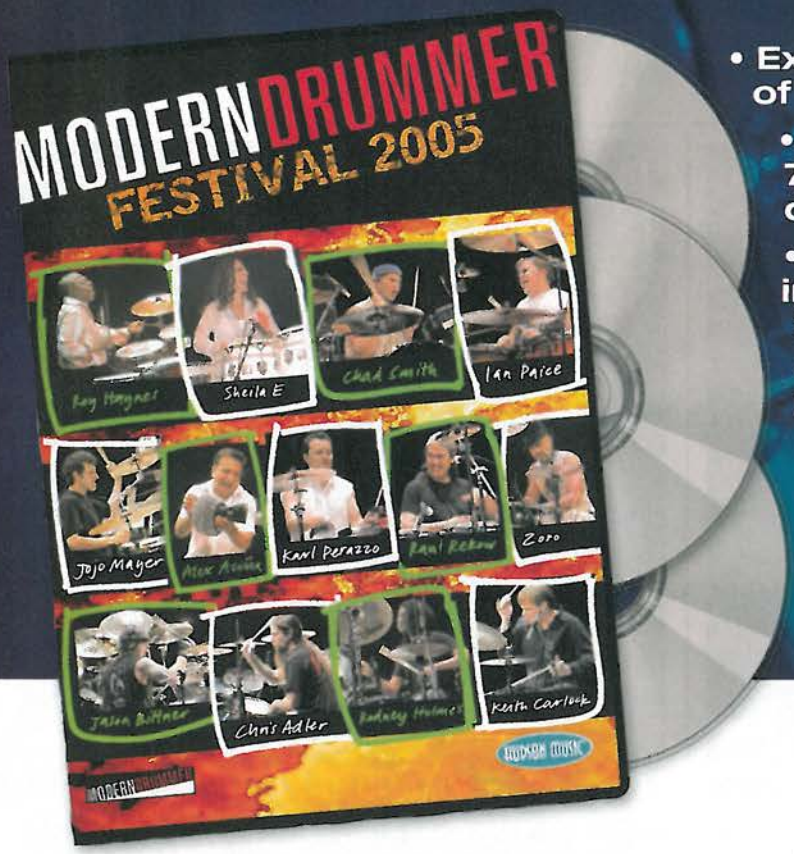


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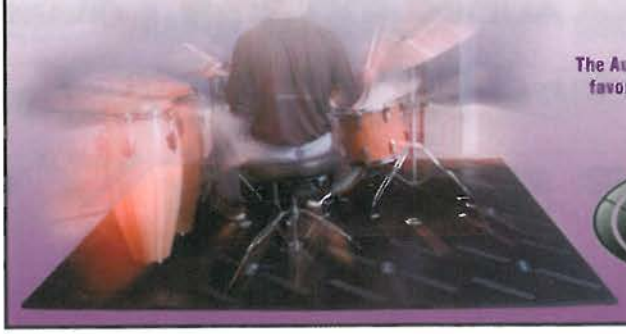

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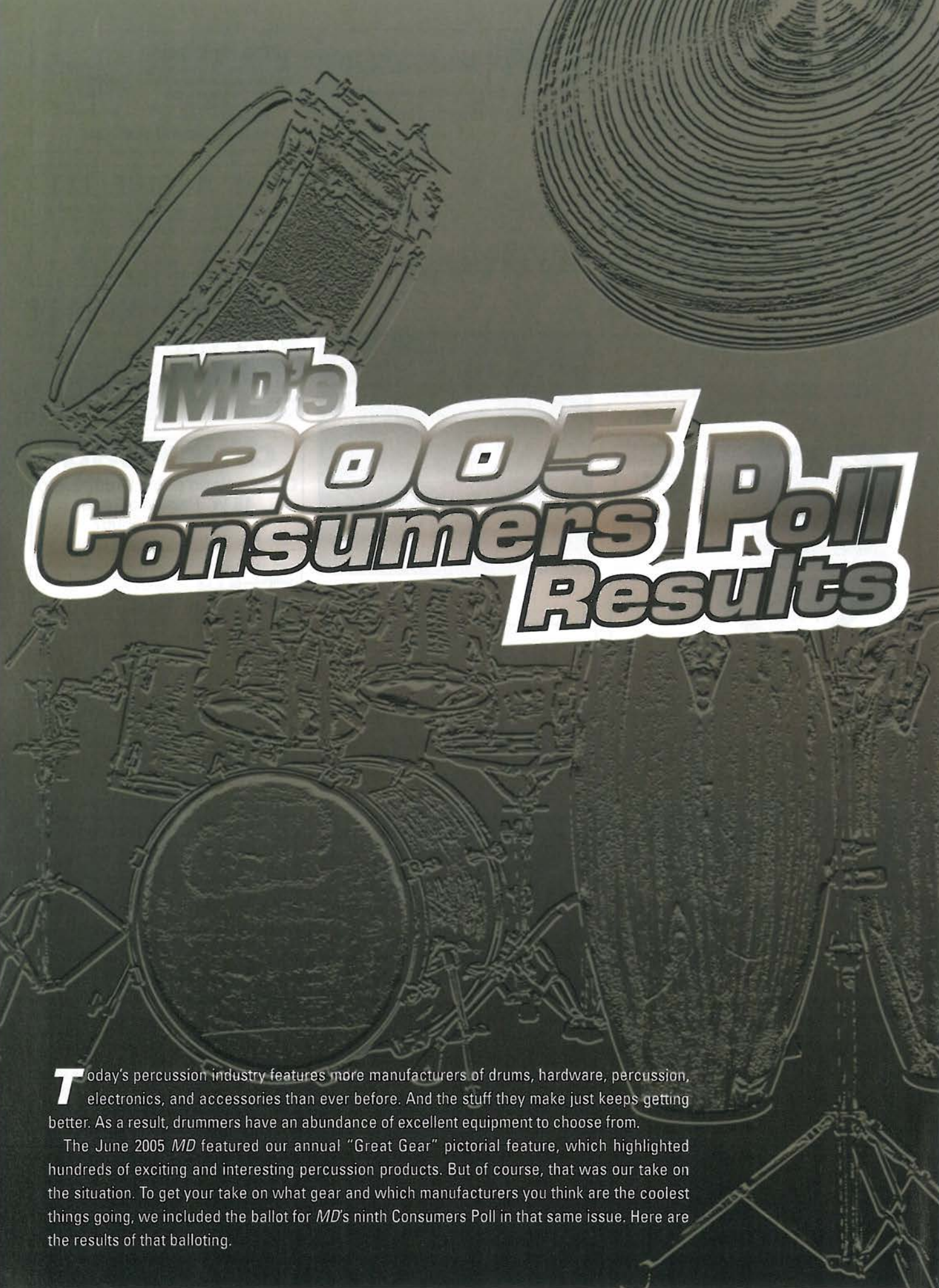


# MD's 2005 Consumers Poll Results

Today's percussion industry features more manufacturers of drums, hardware, percussion, electronics, and accessories than ever before. And the stuff they make just keeps getting better. As a result, drummers have an abundance of excellent equipment to choose from.

The June 2005 *MD* featured our annual "Great Gear" pictorial feature, which highlighted hundreds of exciting and interesting percussion products. But of course, that was our take on the situation. To get your take on what gear and which manufacturers you think are the coolest things going, we included the ballot for *MD*'s ninth Consumers Poll in that same issue. Here are the results of that balloting.

# Most Innovative

## Acoustic Drums

**Pearl**

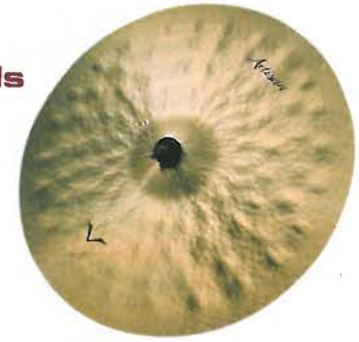
2. Drum Workshop
3. Tama
4. Yamaha
5. Sonor

**Reference Series drums, which feature different shell configurations for different-size drums, helped Pearl earn this year's award for most innovative drum company. Pearl was also named as the drum company with the best consumer service.**

## Cymbals

**Sabian**

2. Zildjian
3. Paiste
4. Meinl
5. Bosphorus



**Sabian was named most innovative cymbal company for products like the Vault Artisan ride. The company was also cited for best consumer service.**

## Percussion

**Latin Percussion**

2. Meinl
3. Pearl
4. Toca
5. Remo

**Products like Matador Custom congas, Karl Perazzo signature timbales, and a larger Giovanni Compact Conga helped Latin Percussion sweep all of the awards in the percussion category.**

## Electronics

**Roland**

2. Yamaha
3. Hart Dynamics
4. ddrum
5. Pintech

**The high-end TD-12S V-Stage electronic kit—along with a habit of "thinking like drummers"—helped Roland win all the electronics categories.**

## Drumsticks

**Pro-Mark**

2. Vic Firth
3. Vater
4. Zildjian
5. Ahead

**Stick designs ranging from the speed-oriented Stinger drumset model to the BS12 wooden bass drum stick earned Pro-Mark the title of most innovative drumstick company. The manufacturer also took the titles for quality & craftsmanship and consumer service.**

## Drumheads

**Remo**

2. Evans
3. Aquarian
4. Attack
5. RMV

**Remo's extensive range of drumheads for drumkit, world percussion, marching, and symphonic applications helped them sweep all categories for drumheads.**

## Hardware

**Drum Workshop**

2. Pearl
3. Gibraltar
4. Tama
5. Yamaha

**DW's focus on cutting-edge pedal and stand development drew praise in this category.**

## Miscellaneous Accessories

**Pro-Mark**

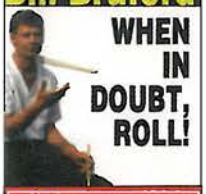
2. Gibraltar
3. Latin Percussion
4. Rhythm Tech
5. Evans

**Pro-Mark's extensive expansion into non-drumstick accessories (including Drum Gum, the Drum Mat, Groove Juice, X-Pads, and hard-shell cymbal cases) earned them the innovation award.**

# Serious Books for Serious Drummers
# THE MODERN DRUMMER LIBRARY

**The Big Band Drummer**
**by Ron Spagnardi**
A complete workbook for improving big band drumming performance.
**$12.95**

**Accent Control**
**by Ron Spagnardi**
Over 1,000 accent exercises using mixed stickings, rolls, flams, and accents around the drums. A must for technique and solo development.
**$12.95**




**When In Doubt, Roll**
**by Bill Bruford**
Bruford's greatest recorded performances, plus exercises to develop facility, flexibility, and creativity.
**$13.95**

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**by Harry Cangany**
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**by Ron Spagnardi**
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**Building Bass Drum Technique**
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Strength, speed, endurance, and control for improved single bass drum performance.
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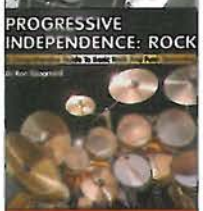


**Progressive Independence: Rock**
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163 pages of essential rock and funk drumming techniques.
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**Progressive Independence**
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A comprehensive guide to coordinated independence for jazz drummers.
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**The Drummer's Time**
**by Rick Mattingly**
A compilation of enlightening conversations with the great drummers of jazz, from Louie Bellson to Tony Williams.
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**The Drummer's Studio Survival Guide**
**by Mark Parsons**
The definitive book on recording drums, for the novice to professional drummer.
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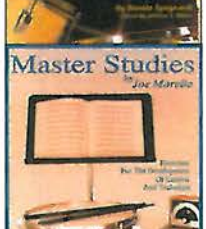
**by Ron Spagnardi**
60 of the world's legendary jazz drumming greats. CD included.
**$19.95**

**Master Studies**
**by Joe Morello**
*The* book on hand development and drumstick control.
**$12.95**




**Inside Out**
**by Billy Ward**
Exploring the mental, creative, and artistic aspects of drumming, by one of *MD*'s most popular columnists.
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**Classic Tracks**
**by Joe Bergamini**
Note for note transcriptions of thirteen of the world's greatest drummers. Bonham, Gadd, Phillips, Peart, Porcaro, and more.
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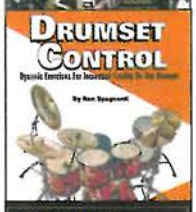


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A wide selection of dynamic exercises designed to increase facility on the drumset.
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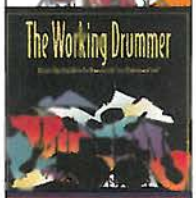
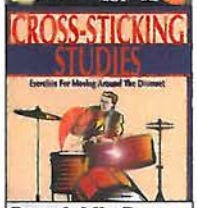



**The Working Drummer**
**by Rick Van Horn**
Everything the working clubdate drummer needs to know to succeed.
**$14.95**

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**by Ron Spagnardi**
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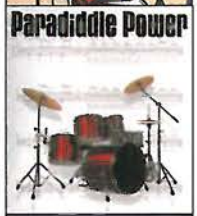
**$12.95**

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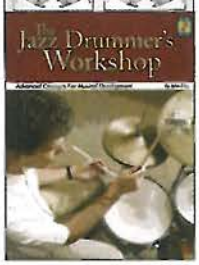


**The Jazz Drummer's Workshop**
**by John Riley**
An essential method book for the advanced jazz drummer by one of today's finest players. Includes a CD.
**$17.95**

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# Best Quality And Craftsmanship

## Acoustic Drums
### Drum Workshop

2. Pearl
3. Tama
4. Yamaha
5. Mapex

**The exotic nature and sheer variety of DW's finishes, along with their consistent construction excellence, earned DW the award for quality and craftsmanship.**

## Cymbals
### Zildjian

2. Sabian
3. Paiste
4. Bosphorus
5. Meinl

**The quality and craftsmanship award in the cymbal category went to Zildjian, for models like the K Custom Dry Complex ride.**

## Percussion
### Latin Percussion

2. Pearl
3. Meinl
4. Gon Bops
5. Toca

**Voters mentioned the consistency of sound of LP's congas and other drums, as well as the reliability and functional designs of their blocks, bells, and accessories.**

## Drumheads
### Remo

2. Evans
3. Aquarian
4. Attack
5. Ludwig

**Remo heads were cited for consistency of tone from head to head within each model line, as well as for overall durability.**

## Hardware
### Drum Workshop

2. Pearl
3. Tama
4. Gibraltar
5. Yamaha

**The strength, versatility, and creative designs of DW's hardware put the company at the top of this list.**

## Electronics
### Roland

2. Yamaha
3. Hart Dynamics
4. ddrum
5. Shure

**Roland products were cited for being easy to understand and perform with, and for holding up under heavy use.**

## Drumsticks
### Pro-Mark

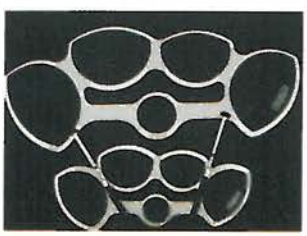
2. Vic Firth
3. Vater
4. Regal Tip
5. Ahead

**Resistance to breakage was the key issue with drumsticks, and Pro-Mark's sticks earned top marks for that characteristic.**

## Miscellaneous Accessories
### Pro-Mark

2. Gibraltar
3. Latin Percussion
4. Danmar
5. Rhythm Tech

**Voters cited the consistent quality of Pro-Mark's accessory items and lauded the company's focus on user-friendly designs.**



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Featuring his advanced technique, awe-inspiring speed and four-way "interdependence", *Creative Control* showcases Thomas Lang's incredible drumming and innovative concepts.

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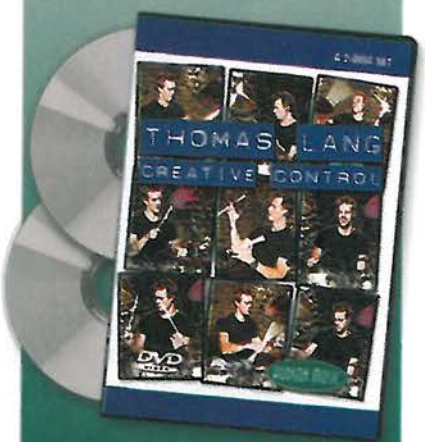


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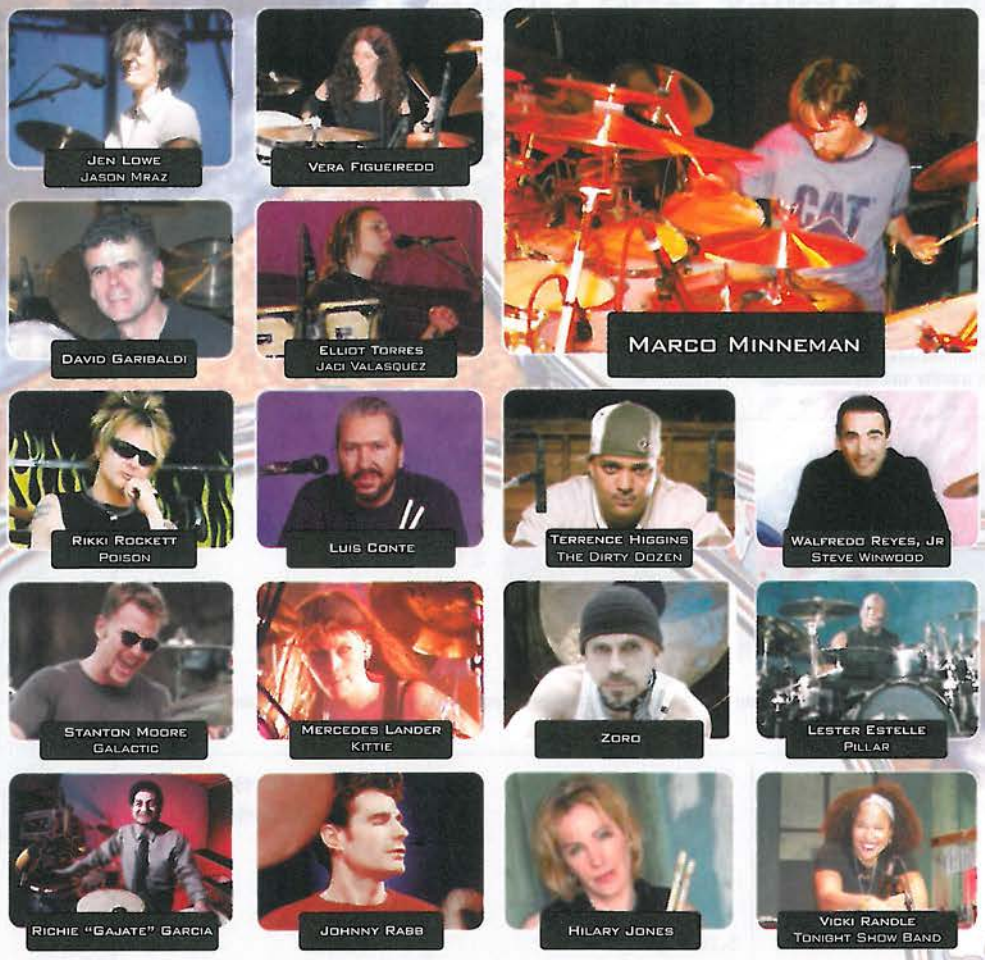

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# Most Consumer/ Service Oriented Company

"Consumer service" is often thought of mainly in terms of after-sale requests for product information or warranty repairs. However, today's consumer-focused marketplace involves other factors, like informative Web sites, promptly answered phone calls and emails, and reasonable pricing. These criteria for voting were cited repeatedly in every category, so we won't repeat them. Here's our list of winners and runners-up in this important department.

## Acoustic Drums

**Pearl**

2. Drum Workshop
3. Tama
4. Yamaha
5. Mapex

## Cymbals

**Sabian**

2. Zildjian
3. Paiste
4. Meinl
5. Bosphorus

## Percussion

**Latin Percussion**

2. Pearl
3. Meinl
4. Toca
5. Remo

## Electronics

**Roland**

2. Yamaha
3. Hart Dynamics
4. ddrum
5. Shure

## Drumsticks

**Pro-Mark**

2. Vic Firth
3. Vater
4. Regal Tip
5. Zildjian

## Drumheads

**Remo**

2. Evans
3. Aquarian
4. Attack
5. Ludwig

## Hardware

**Drum Workshop**

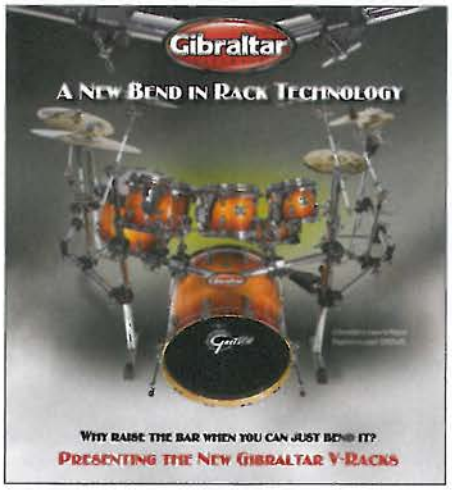
2. Pearl
3. Gibraltar
4. Tama
5. Yamaha

**In addition to being named most innovative hardware company for designs ranging from the lightweight flush-base 6000 series to the heavy-duty 9702 dual cymbal boom stand, DW was cited for quality & craftsmanship and for consumer service.**

## Miscellaneous Accessories

**Gibraltar**

2. Pro-Mark
3. Latin Percussion
4. Rhythm Tech
5. HQ Percussion




**Responsiveness to consumer ideas and requests—like the bent-pipe V-rack shown here—earned Gibraltar the title of most consumer/service oriented accessory company.**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*Musical Drumming in Different Styles* clearly defines what "playing for the music" is all about—offering the grooves, fills, tips and concepts necessary to play a wide range of styles with confidence.

***4 hrs : 20 mins • $49.95***

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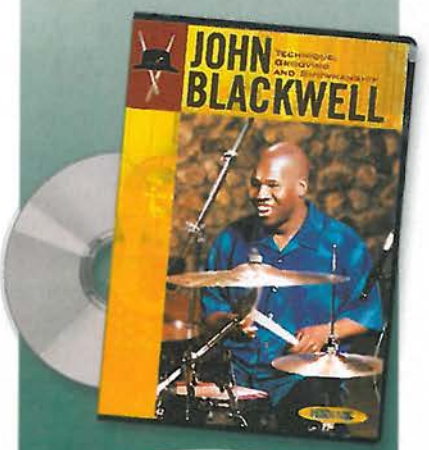


HUDSON MUSIC

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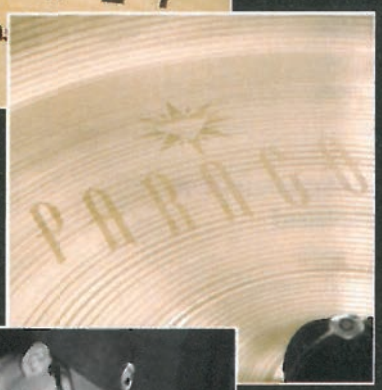
**#1 MOST INNOVATIVE CYMBALS**

**BEST QUALITY AND CRAFTSMANSHIP**

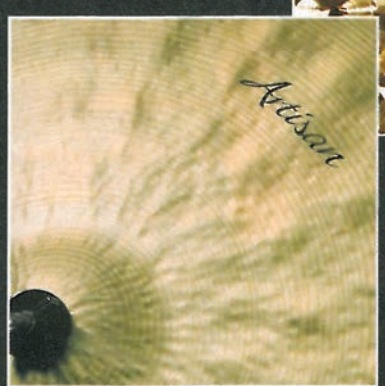
**#1 MOST CONSUMER/SERVICE ORIENTED**

**MOST INTERESTING AD CAMPAIGN**
Neil Peart Paragon Cymbals

**MOST VALUABLE PRODUCT**
Vault Artisan Ride



VAULT TOUR




SABIAN

sabian.com

## Most Interesting Ad Campaign

Over the years, the leading Consumer Poll contenders in this category have invariably been ads featuring photos of beautiful drums and a minimal amount of text. This year was no exception.

Many companies presented such ads. But the ones that caught the eyes (and the votes) of the greatest number of poll respondents were Drum Workshop's two-page spreads featuring Terry Bozzio, Sheila E, Neil Peart, and Marco Minnemann standing alongside their elaborate kits.

Sabian's Paragon cymbal ads featuring Neil Peart, Pearl's artistic ads introducing their Reference Series drums, and Yamaha's "From Birth To Performance" layouts with Teddy Campbell and Mike Bordin each received significant mention.

**A name artist, an eye-catching drumkit, and very few words—these are the elements that earned DW the win for most interesting ad campaign.**

## Most Valuable Product

No fewer than fifty separate products received votes in the MVP category. Most of those were hardware and accessories. That's not surprising, since these are the items that drummers rely on to provide functional service, gig after gig.

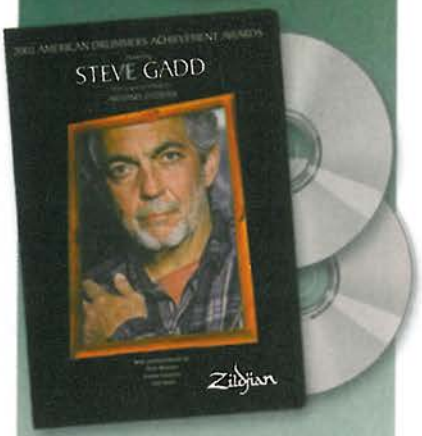
The 2005 Most Valuable Product winner is DW's 9000 series single bass drum pedal. Voters lauded the pedal's imaginative design, smooth and silent operation, quick response, overall quality of construction, and reliability.

Among the runners-up were Pearl Reference Series and Tama Superstar drums, Sabian Vault Artisan ride, Zildjian K Custom Dry Complex ride, and Paiste Dark Energy cymbals, the Roland TD20S V-Pro electronic kit, and Meinl's Luis Conte Signature Congas.

**Drum Workshop's 9000 series Floating Rotor single bass drum pedal was named most valuable product in this year's poll.**

That wraps up the 2005 poll. We thank all those who voted, and we congratulate all of the winners.

HUDSON MUSIC




Capturing the excitement and entertainment of an historic musical event, the Gadd/ADAA DVD set features an incredible concert and awards ceremony plus back-stage interviews and much more!

***5 hrs : 10 mins • $49.95***

*Hudson Music DVDs and books are available at your local music retailer. To find a dealer near you, log on to www.hudsonmusic.com or call 1-888-796-2992.*

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Acclaimed as a brilliant, entertaining and educational resource, Steve Smith's *Drumset Technique/History of the U.S. Beat* is an encyclopedia of drumming techniques and concepts.

***4 hrs : 40 mins • $49.95***

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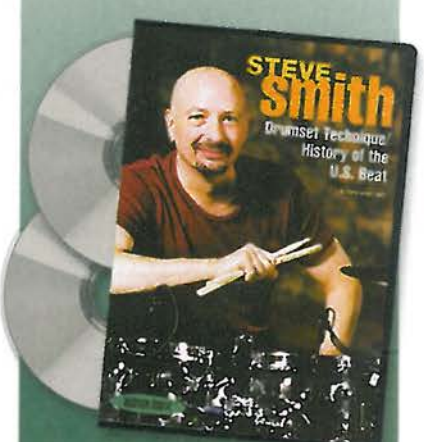


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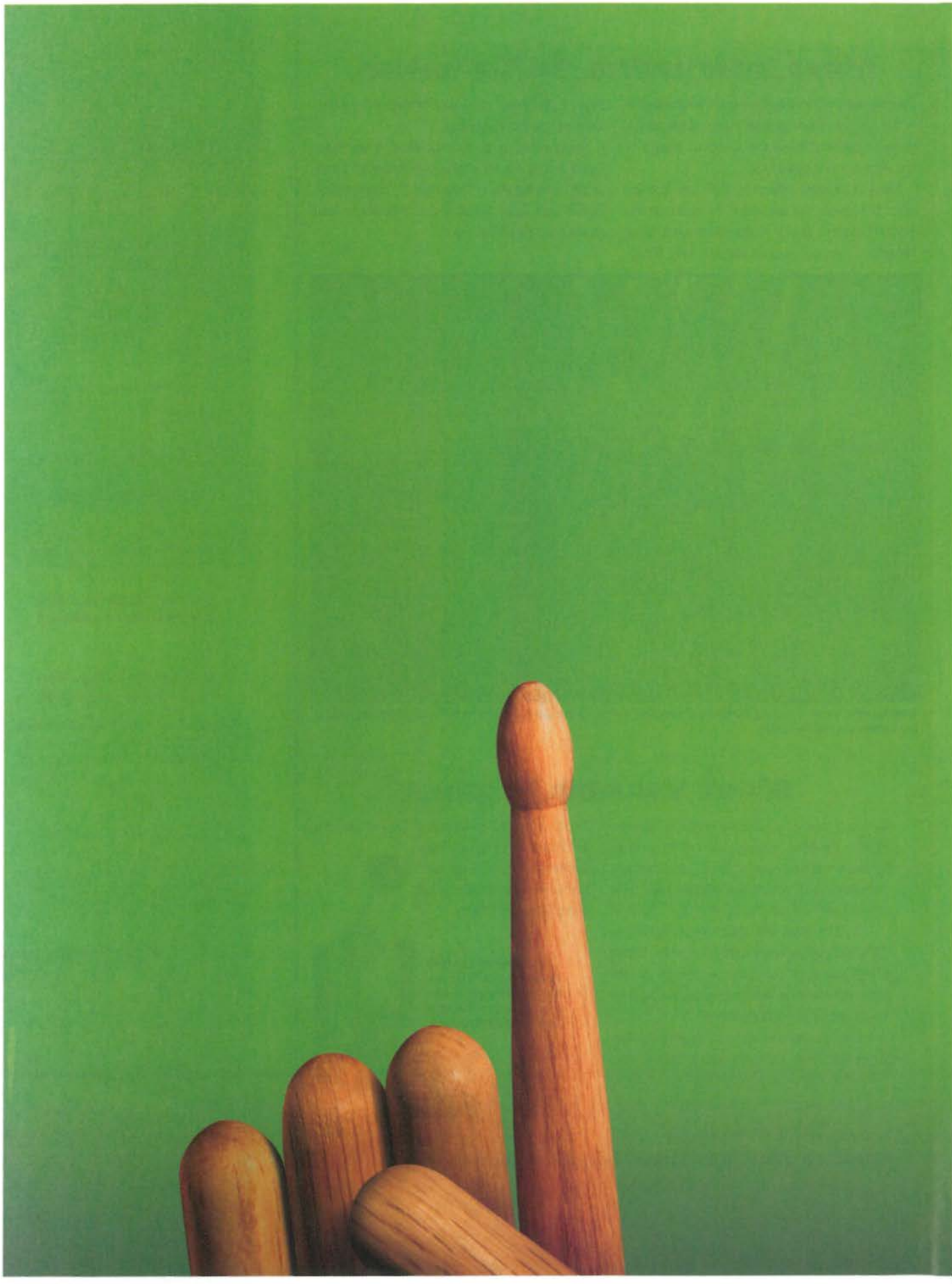

YOU SAID IT WITH YOUR VOTE.

pro-mark

## 2005 Modern Drummer Consumer's Poll Results

Most Innovative, Drumsticks
**Number One: Pro-Mark**

Most Innovative, Miscellaneous Accessories
**Number One: Pro-Mark**

Best Quality and Craftsmanship, Drumsticks
**Number One: Pro-Mark**

Best Quality and Craftsmanship, Miscellaneous Accessories
**Number One: Pro-Mark**

Most Consumer/Service-Oriented Drumstick Company
**Number One: Pro-Mark**

Thank you to all the readers who voted us Number One.

Manny L. Brotstein
President

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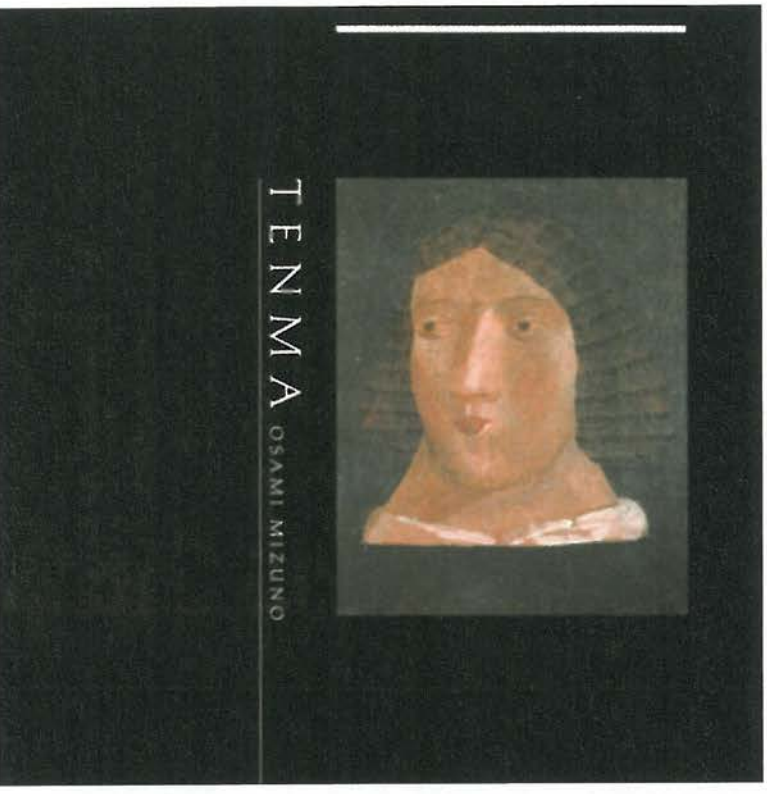
# RECORDINGS

rating scale ◀poor classic▶




## Osami Mizuno

Tenma (Office Mizuno) ♦♦♦♦

Drummer/leader Osami Mizuno, based in Japan, is a seriously accomplished drummer who studied under Alan Dawson. This CD takes on a personal tone, as each composition is themed and dedicated to someone. While this approach does create a lack of consistency for the album overall, this is minor concern when hearing the music. The compositions here mix adventurous jazz and jazz/rock with the interesting perspective of traditional Japanese music, which really adds something special. As for Mizuno, swirling brushes, stately rolling cymbals, and an intense drum solo show his talent. Through the diversity of this album, Mizuno shows his mastery and sensitivity as a drummer. (www.mizuno.net) **Martin Patmos**

## Steve Kimock Band Eudemonic (SCI Fidelity) ♦♦♦½

Kimock and crew finally enter the studio after six years of hitting the road. The guitarist's soft, grainy tone can lack a certain bite, but his group's atmospheric jam-rock with a world-music bent lends itself well to extended instrumental explorations. Kimock is a subtle player, while his drummer, co-writer, and coproducer, **RODNEY HOLMES**, is a little flashier. Holmes plays with the stylistic and dynamic range that the music demands—and brings an abundance of clever beats and wicked fills. His time-travel solo break in "Elmer's Revenge" has it all: taste, technique, imagination, and groove. **Michael Parillo**

## Seether Karma And Effect (Wind-Up) ♦♦♦

Seether's sophomore effort is a burly rock album that doesn't take much warming up—in fact, it's off and running early on and maintains its momentum without many snags. With drummer **JOHN HUMPHREY** now in its permanent lineup, the band sounds more unified. Humphrey's muscular patterns glide well with the ensemble; the 6/8 phrases on the choruses of "The Gift" are both clean yet propulsive. The up-tempo "I'm The One" launches with crashes ablaze, but keeps the madness in check with a straightforward quarter-note bell drive during the chorus. Such good decisions make Humphrey's tasteful performance that much more admirable. **Waleed Rashidi**

## For The Ride Home

*some other stuff we're digging this month*

**Coldplay** *X & Y* (Capitol)
Put away your Drumometer and your tattered copy of *Master Studies*, and check out these *songs*.

**Clifford Brown And Max Roach**
*Study In Brown* (1955, EmArcy)
After half a century, opener "Cherokee" is *still* the benchmark for up-tempo bop drumming.

**00100** *Gold And Green* (Thrill Jockey)
Boredoms drummer Yoshimi's side project from a couple years back, available in the States for the first time.

**Fieldwork**
*Simulated Progress* (Pi Recordings)
If you want to rocket your commute into an alternate universe, try this one!

**The High Strung**
*Moxie Bravo* (Future Farmer)
Song! Songs! Songs! Drums! Drums! Drums!

**Brad Mehldau**
*Largo* (2002, Warner Bros.)
Matt Chamberlain and Jim Keltner improvising on a Radiohead tune...enough said.

**The King Of France**
*The King Of France* (Echo)
Near perfect pop from rock journalist Michael Azerrad and Kelly Deal sidekick Steve Salad.

**The Muggs** *The Muggs* (Times Beach)
Such swagger!

## Significant Reissues *by Ken Micallef*

### Gentle Giant

Though they were one of the most pioneering of the '70s progressive bands, England's Gentle Giant never cashed in like their countrymen. But their music is just as powerful. *The Power And The Glory* (1974) was released while the band was slowly winding down from its mid-'70s peak with albums like *Freehand* and *In A Glass House* (both previously released in this GG 35th-anniversary series). Drummer **JOHN P. WEATHERS** (formerly of The Graham Bond Organization) played with excellent clarity and precision within arrangements that must have been impossible to read. Time signatures of 7/4, 5/4, and 10/8 abound through terrific twists and tumbles.

Like many of their art-rock peers, as the decade wound down, Gentle Giant turned to more straightforward beats. The reissues of *The Missing Piece* ('77) and *Giant For A Day* ('78) show a band in transition, yet still capable of musical surprises. (DRT)

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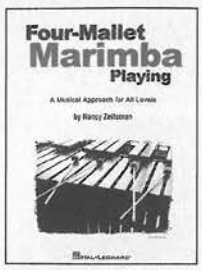


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## The Bad Plus Blunt Object: Live In Tokyo (Sony BMG) ♦♦½

This band requires a higher level of patience than I currently possess, although the Tokyo crowd didn't seem to have a problem waiting as they tried to wrestle the profound out of a Blondie tune, out-camp Queen on "We Are The Champions," and skewer Rodgers & Hart. Their originals are played in earnest and have fascinating moments, with drummer **DAVID KING** all over the double-time feel of "And Here We Test Our Powers Of Observation." He also doubles up on the ballad "Flim," serving equally as instigator and supporter. Shooting to be their generation's Keith Jarrett Trio, the boys could use a little less bad, a little more plus. **Robin Tolleson**

## Oz Noy Ha! (Magnatude) ♦♦♦♦

Here surrounding himself with stellar NYC musicians like **KEITH CARLOCK**, **ANTON FIG**, **James Genus**, and **Will Lee**, Israel-born guitarist Oz Noy employs the same radical tempo shifts, rangy guitar tones, and funk/jazz melodies as near-legend Wayne Krantz, only his touch is more raunchy and rockish. Still, the album is a great chance to hear Carlock blow and Fig do his usual elephant-walking groove thing. Whenever you can find a recording where Carlock lays waste to his kit with harrowing dynamics, stretched phrasing, inventive patterns, and aggressive metric modulations on six out of ten tracks, buy it! **Ken Micallef**

## Trevor Taylor

New Music For Percussion, Sound Sculpture, Tape, And Live Electronics. (FMR) ♦♦♦♦

English percussionist **TREVOR TAYLOR** specializes in contemporary and new music. These six original compositions find him covering a wide variety of percussive sounds and moods. In "Eclipse" and "Cosmo," both from the early '70s, drums and mallet instruments often play in dense, shifting clusters of notes, reminiscent of avant-garde composers like Stockhausen and Cage. The remaining three tracks all feature various "sound sculptures" by Derek Shiel, Steve Hubback, and Francois and Bernard Baschet. The metallic sounds are often industrial and otherworldly, as they clatter and clang, creating eerie soundscapes. (www.fmr-records.com) **Michael Bettine**

## Starflyer 59

Talking Voice Vs. Singing Voice (Tooth & Nail) ♦♦♦♦

Following up last year's tough-riffed *I Am The Portuguese Blues*, Starflyer 59 return sounding decidedly more sedate and delicate. And drummer **FRANK LENZ** has shifted gears accordingly; his impeccable touch elicits a fragile yet strangely powerful vibe here. From the spooky mystique of "A Lists Go On" to the stuttering snare and sweeping, dramatic exit of "Night Life," Lenz seamlessly integrates his patterns into the lush music with the aid of washy crashes and a comfortable, bold snare tone. With these last two Starflyer releases, Lenz has proven he's *way* more than a one-trick drummer. **Waleed Rashidi**

## Of Further Interest

The ongoing series of **Bill Bruford** reissues continues with his acclaimed solo albums *Feels Good To Me* and *One Of A Kind* (Winterfold), as well as his Earthworks' self-titled album and *Dig?* (Summerfold).

Drummers are musicians, right? Well, then it's up to us to at least be familiar with music-making tools that *aren't* designed to be hit. ***Tipbook: Amplifiers & Effects*** by Hugo Pinksterboer is a handy (and cheap—$12.95!) place to round out your knowledge of basic sound amplification and manipulation. (Hal Leonard)

Back when the term "industrial" referred to bands who made music by literally taking hammers and drills to the innards of abandoned factories, **Einstürzende Neubauten** could not have known that their underground sounds would directly lead to platinum-selling bands like Nine Inch Nails and Ministry. The DVD release of *1/2 Mensch*, a long-form visual companion to their 1986 album of the same name, reminds us just how ahead of their time they were. (www.somebizzare.com)

A classic rock sound with just the right amount of contemporary touches makes **The Jones Gang**'s new album, *Any Day Now*, a hot listen. Oh, and that band name refers to Kenney Jones, he of Faces and Who fame. Classic rock with class. (www.aaomusic.com)

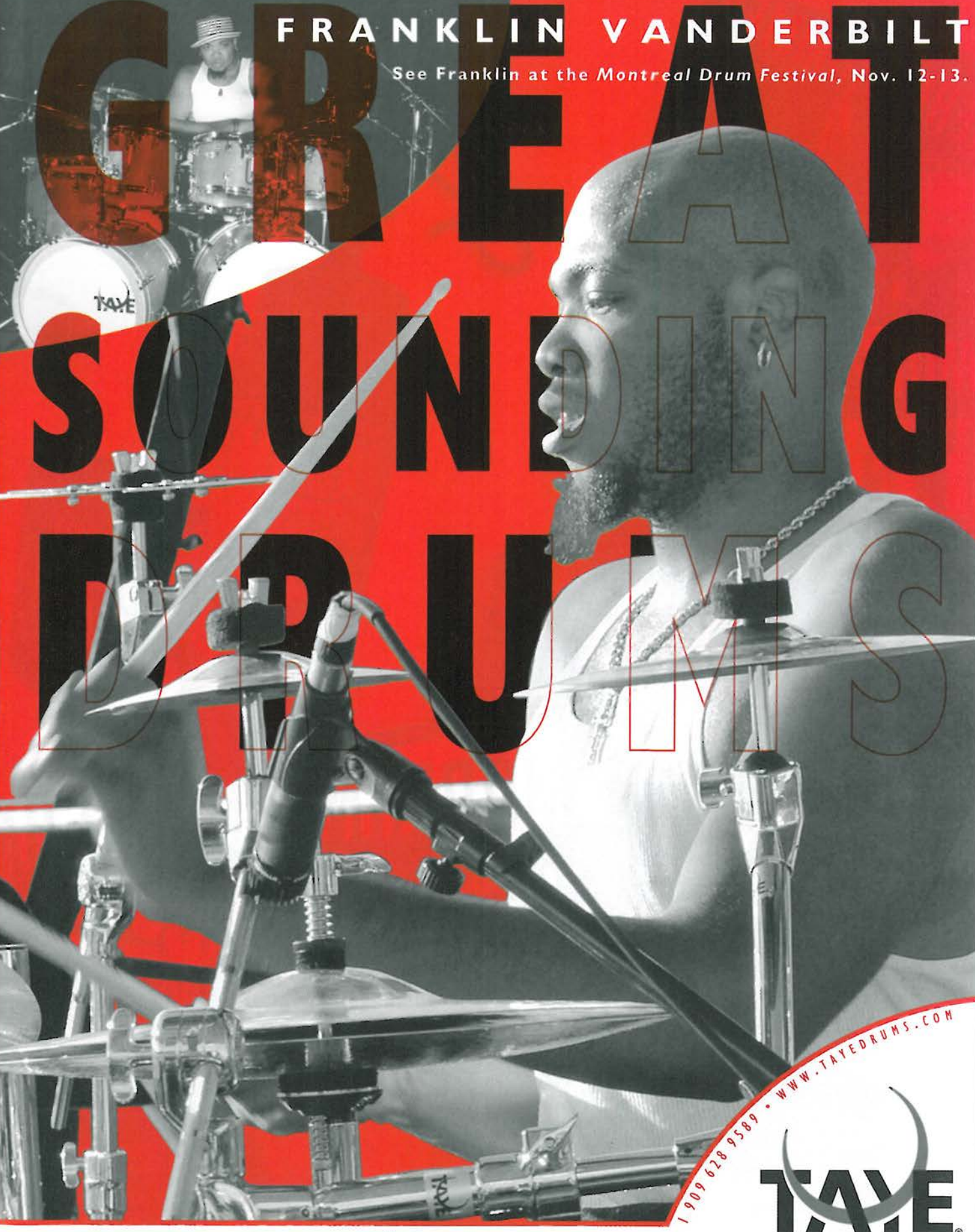
## Johannes Mössinger New York Trio

Nu Love (Challenge) ♦♦♦½

Though mostly mellow, the fourth installment from pianist Mössinger and his New York trio packs a surprising rhythmic punch courtesy of journeyman drummer **KARL LATHAM** (Edgar and Johnny Winter, Victor Bailey, Larry Coryell). Afro-Latin, swing, drum 'n' bass, and funked-up beats seamlessly weave through 4/4, 6/8, and 3/4 time, just as they reverberate and help spawn Mössinger's icy tonal stabs and **Kermit Driscoll**'s elastic bass phrasings. Guest sax therapist **Bob Malach** sets the intensity-level controls on high for "Meeting Different Worlds," triggering Latham's slightly swung, attack-dog-in-heat drum solo. Instinctual musical anticipation and sonic elegance (sullied by aggression) make this cozy acoustic jazz CD very exciting. **Will Romano**

## Nile Annihilation Of The Wicked (Relapse) ♦♦♦½

Sheer brutality isn't enough. There's got to be something to go with it. How about dark, violent, ancient-Egyptian mythology, as well as arrangements bordering on the symphonic? Nile's death metal combines all this, plus stick work that demands both strong eardrums and detail-revealing headphones. On the South Carolina band's fourth full-length, **GEORGE KOLLIAS's** drumming isn't just wickedly heavy, it's monstrously creative. Following an exotic guitar intro, Kollias whips up a sandstorm of intricacies on "Cast Down The Heretic." And as "User-Maat-Re" progs up Nile's onslaught with angular yet curiously melodic riffage, Kollias's drumming becomes a focal point with its bizarre time changes and intriguing patterns. Pharaoh orders you to check out Kollias. **Jeff Perlah**

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page 146
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## The Ramones End Of The Century (Rhino)

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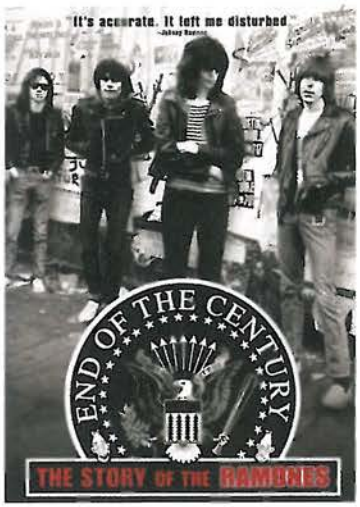



Though the last five years have seen the release of a handful of Ramones-related DVDs, this is the one to get for the definitive story of perhaps the most influential rock band of the past twenty-five years. Through rare archival footage and extremely candid interviews with all seven former bandmembers, *End Of The Century* traces the often comical and at times heartbreaking story of the dysfunctional family that was The Ramones. While the feature is fascinating, it's the DVD's plethora of extras that will be of special interest to drummers. Highlights include a poignant return visit to the group's Forest Hills, NY neighborhood with original drummer and band mastermind **TOMMY RAMONE**; a mini-drum clinic from his replacement, **MARKY RAMONE**; an in-depth interview with third drummer **RICHIE RAMONE**; and a glimpse into the brief, little-covered period between Richie's departure and Marky's reinstatement, when Blondie timekeeper **CLEM BURKE** (AKA Elvis Ramone) manned the band's drum throne. **Jon Wurster**

## The Essence Of Brushes by Ed Thigpen (Warner Bros.)

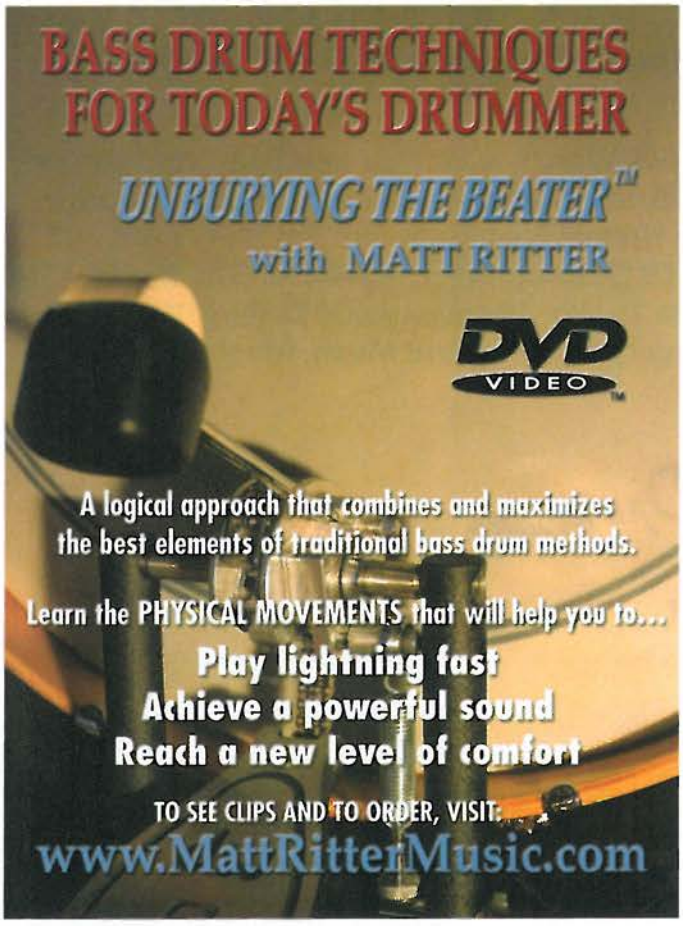
**level: beginner to advanced, $24.95**

Jazz drummer Ed Thigpen shares his vast array of brushwork concepts and techniques on this classic reissue. Thigpen, known for his masterful technique, goes in-depth with sounds, accents, ballads, blues, Latin, shuffle, jazz, and 3/4 time brushwork. Inspiring trio performances with bass legend Ron Carter and guitarist Tony Purrone highlight this disc. New DVD features include a performance-only selection. An essential brushwork encyclopedia. **Mike Haid**

## Play Timbales Now The Basics And Beyond by Richie Gajate-Garcia (Warner Bros.)

**level: beginner to advanced, $24.95**

Award-winning drummer/percussionist Richie Gajate-Garcia offers his years of percussion mastery in this condensed, well-organized (and bilingual) journey through the history, set-up, and playing techniques of the timbales. Garcia clearly explains the traditional timbale rhythms centered on the various clave patterns, as well as his own variations. He then illustrates more contemporary styles and a few basic drumset variations of several Latin rhythms. Two accompanying CDs offer many of the exercises at various tempos. This is a complete and essential tool for discovering, learning, and exploring the authentic timbale rhythms of the masters. **Mike Haid**

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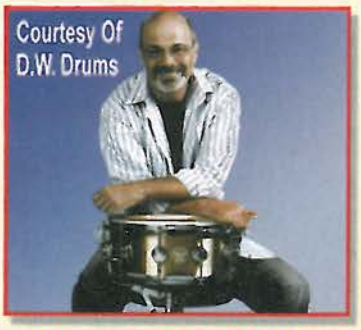


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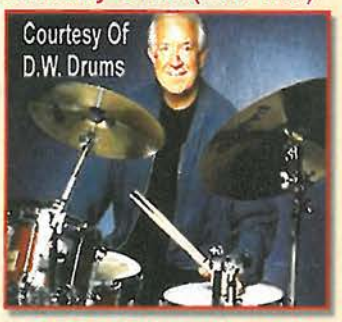


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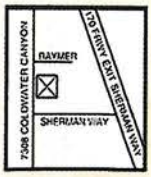


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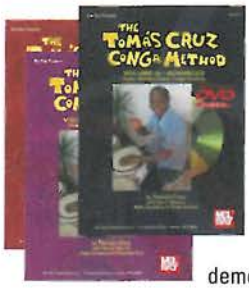


Have you ever heard some hot Latin music and wondered what the conga player was doing? Well, Tomás "Tomasito" Cruz—one of the leading congueros of the modern Cuban style—has put together a thorough tutorial. Spread over three volumes, the package features plenty of explanations, exercises, and pictures, as well as three informative and easy-to-use DVDs (over 90 minutes each).

The first volume begins with the basic strokes. Set your congas up in front of the TV or computer, pop the DVD in the player, and watch Cruz demonstrate each stroke, accelerating from a slow speed to a performance tempo. Then play along with three dozen exercises, plus rudiments and marchas (repeating patterns of strokes).

The Intermediate volume repeats the same introduction from the first book, then moves into Afro-Cuban folkloric marchas, marchas from older Cuban pop music, songo, marchas from non-Cuban rhythms, recursos, and soloing. It ends with an introduction to the clave.

The third volume picks up at the clave patterns and dives into timba marchas. (Timba is the commonly accepted term for the contemporary style of concert and dance music that's been played in Cuba since about 1989.) By the end, you're inventing your own marchas.

One of the best things about the DVDs is that most exercises are in pairs: The first shows the exercise at tempo; the second starts with the first stroke and adds one stroke at a time as the exercise is repeated. If you can't study with a Cuban conguero, this package is the next best thing.

**Lauren Vogel Weiss**

## Fill Workbook

by Dawn Richardson (Mel Bay)

**level: beginner to intermediate, $19.95**

While the gymnastics presented in some drum books can be positively mind-blowing, in real life the short fill is much more common, in demand, and practical. This book/CD package aims to foster creativity in those small musical spaces.

Richardson lays out 4/4 rock drum beats of varying complexity that end with half-, one-, or two-beat fills. Each fill is first presented on the snare, with variations using the kit underneath. Plenty of space is left to pencil in one's own ideas and favorites. A CD solidly demonstrates everything in the first half of the book, although as a reference recording it tends to lack feel. What's really missing, however, is how a fill relates to the music and sets up parts of the song. Some guidance in this area—why one fill is more effective than another—would round out the lesson. Still, *Fill Workbook*'s open-ended presentation should be useful for teachers and beginning students interested broadening their rock drumming vocabulary.

**Martin Patmos**

## Contemporary African Drumset Styles
### Book 3: Mbalax

by Chris Miller (Little Marlow)

**level: intermediate to advanced, $29.95**

If you're looking for a new challenge, this is the book. Mbalax is a popular music style that evolved in Senegal from traditional native music, Western pop instrumentation, and Cuban music. Most famously played by Youssou N'Dour, the style continues to evolve, drawing on rock and rap as influences.

Starting simple, the book begins with ostinatos in two-measure phrases and progressively builds to longer phrases that feature unusual snare and bass placement laced within the hi-hat. The ultimate goal here is to seamlessly switch between 4/4 and 6/8, as these time signatures are frequently woven together in the mbalax style. With two CDs clearly demonstrating everything, drummers working through this book will come away not only understanding mbalax, but with a deeper, more sophisticated and creative sense of groove. (www.cadss.com)

**Martin Patmos**

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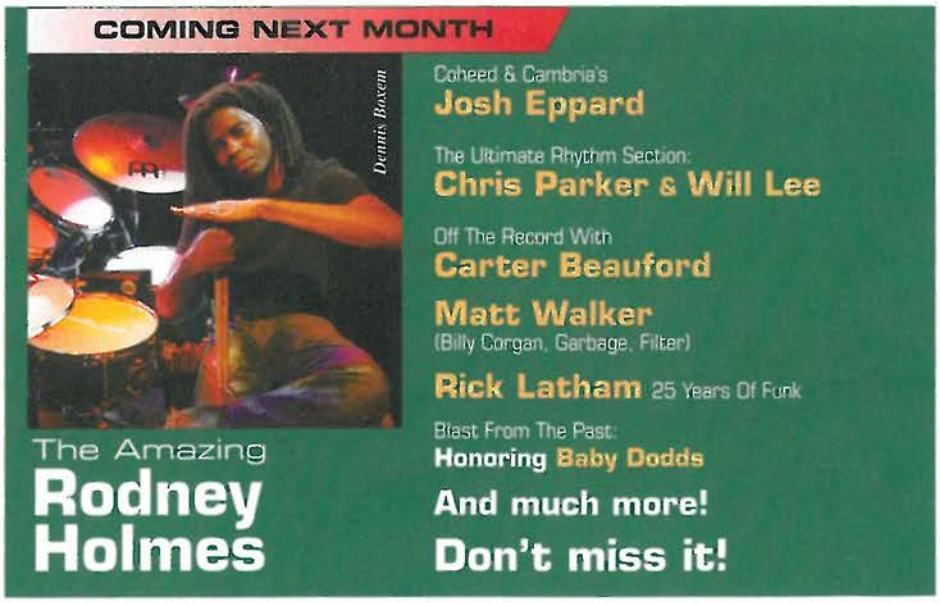

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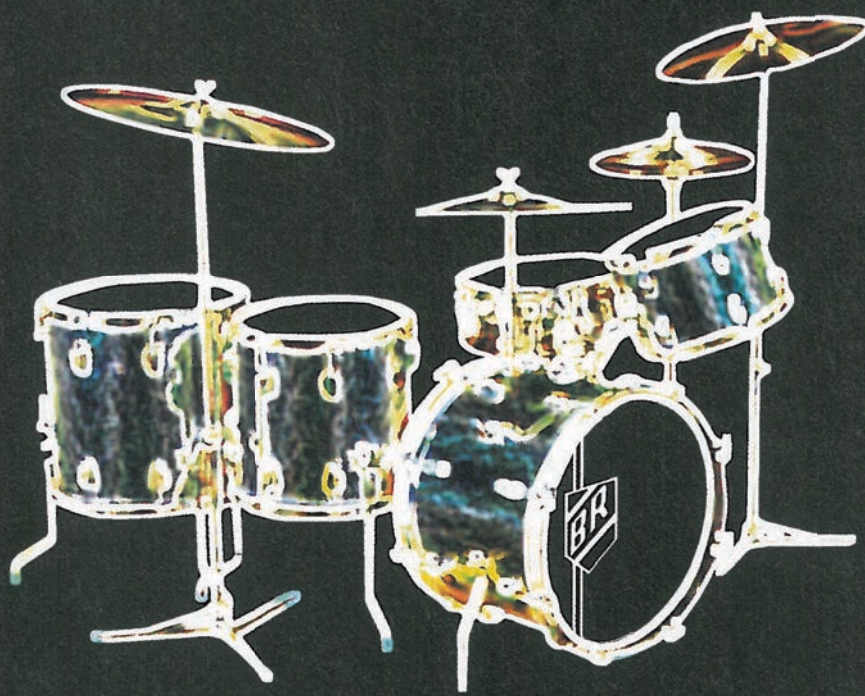


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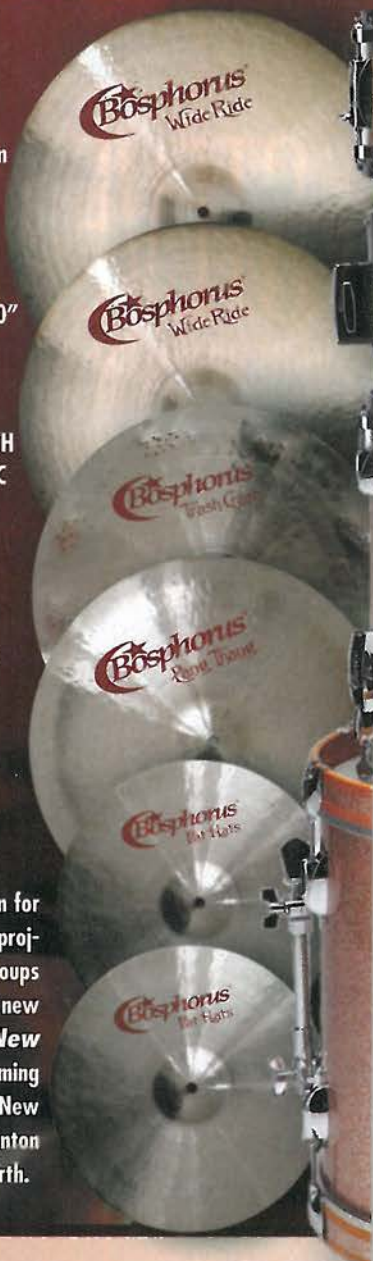


### Stanton Moore
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Raised in New Orleans, Stanton is one of the hottest and most versatile young drummers on the scene today. Known for his personal style of Crescent City funk and groove, he is a founding member of ***Galactic*** and is involved in many side projects that can take him anywhere from Jazz to Funk to Metal. In addition to Galactic, he records and performs with groups as varied as ***Garage-a-Trois, The Preservation Hall Jazz Band*** and ***Corrosion of Conformity.*** With his new 2005 DVD releases ***A Traditional Approach to New Orleans Drumming*** and ***A Modern Approach to New Orleans Drumming*** as part of a series called ***Take It To The Street*** produced by Carl Fischer Music and upcoming book with CD, Stanton has entered the realm of being both a serious clinician as well as the leading steward of the New Orleans drumming tradition. Stanton is very particular about his sound and gear and is proud to endorse Bosphorus Stanton Moore series cymbals, Gretsch drums, DW hardware, Remo drumheads, and Stanton Moore Signature Sticks by Vic Firth.

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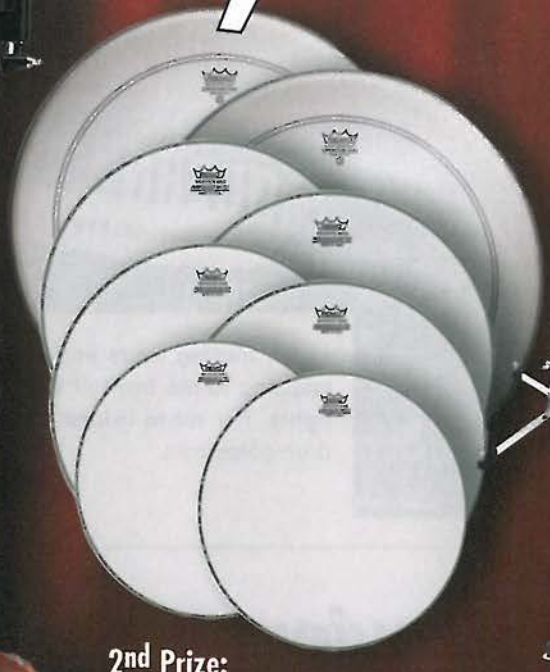

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# Street Drum Corps At Warped Tour

The 2005 Vans Warped Tour hosted a special two-level stage for percussion outfit Street Drum Corps, who brought their *Bang!* show (co-sponsored by *Modern Drummer*) to selected locations throughout California.

The July 6 show in Pomona, California featured four sets by drummers **Frank Zummo** (theSTART), **Adam Alt** (Circus Minor), and **Bobby Alt** (S.T.U.N.). The act played percussion instruments constructed from recycled or discarded materials such as fire extinguishers, scrap metal, buckets, and cans. Starting with a simple 8th-note–based pattern, SDC quickly revved up their show, trading fours and eights, with the Alt brothers stepping to the front of the stage for special solo spotlights. For more information, check out www.streetdrumcorps.com.

**Waleed Rashidi**

# PASIC 2005 Preview

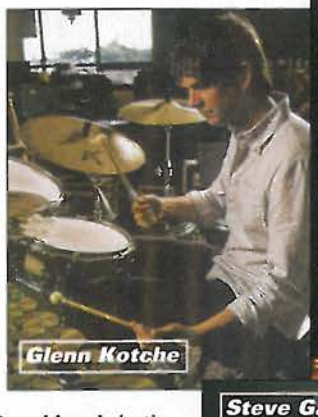
The Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC), to be held this coming November 2-5 in Columbus, Ohio, will present events for drummers and percussionists of all ages and interests. The 30th-anniversary celebration will also feature an 80,000-square-foot Drum & Percussion Expo, where attendees can see, hear, and try the latest instruments and gear.

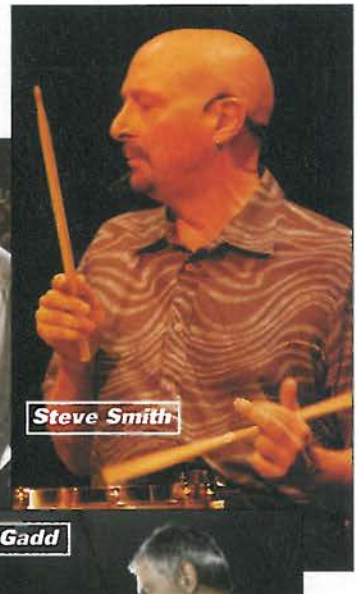
A tribute to Buddy Rich—featuring **Steve Gadd** and **Steve Smith**, along with Buddy's Buddies and the Columbus Jazz Orchestra—will be presented on Saturday, November 5. Other concerts will be announced in the coming weeks.

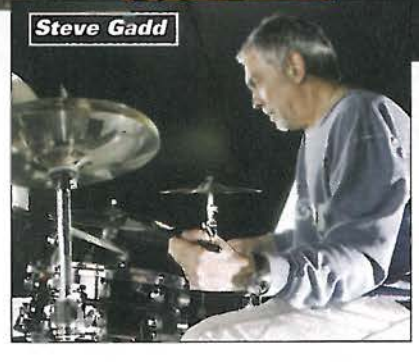
Drumset, world drumming, keyboard, symphonic, and marching clinics and master classes will be presented Thursday through Saturday. Confirmed drumset artists include funk specialist **Rick Latham** & The Groove Doctors, jazz/free-form drummer **Stanton Moore** & Galactic, international drumming sensation **Akira Jimbo**, and alternative rock drummer/percussionist **Glenn Kotche** (Wilco).

Other artists appearing include marimbist **She-e Wu**, marching percussion experts **Thom Hannum** and **Jeff Queen**, orchestral percussionist **Don Liuzzi**, Latin percussionist **Miguel Castro**, and drum circle facilitator **Kalani**. In addition, the annual Marching Percussion Festival will start on Thursday evening and conclude on Friday.

For more details and registration information, go to www.pasic.org or call PAS at (580) 353-1455.



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TLC LIFE UNSCRIPTED

# Zildjian Plays Host

Zildjian's Norwell, Massachusetts headquarters recently hosted members of Aero Force One, the official Aerosmith fan club. They admired and took pictures of one of **Joey Kramer**'s drumsets, met with Craigie and Debbie Zildjian and John DeChristopher, and were treated to a visit with Joey Kramer himself. Joey made sure that every fan went home with a pair of his Zildjian signature drumsticks.

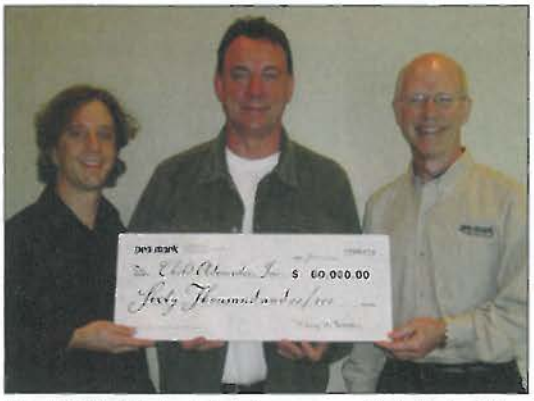
# Pro-Mark/Rush Charity Auction

Pro-Mark and Rush drummer **Neil Peart** recently teamed on an auction to raise money for Child Advocates, Inc. The charity serves children who are victims of neglect and abuse.

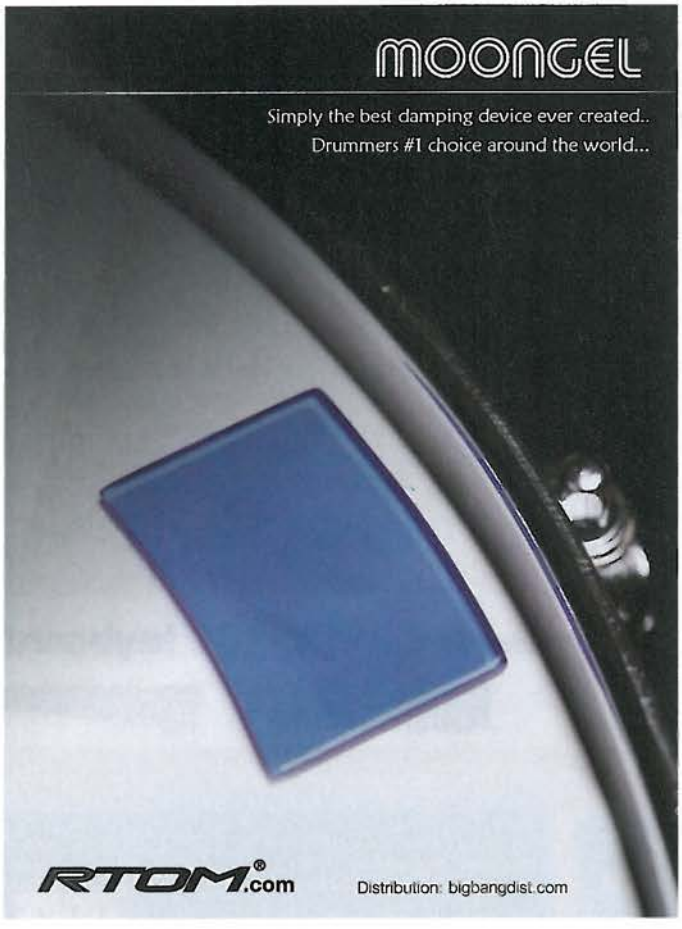
Thirty pairs of Pro-Mark 737 Neil Peart Autograph sticks were imprinted with the Pro-Mark and Rush 30th-anniversary logos. Neil played the sticks on tour, then returned them to Pro-Mark.

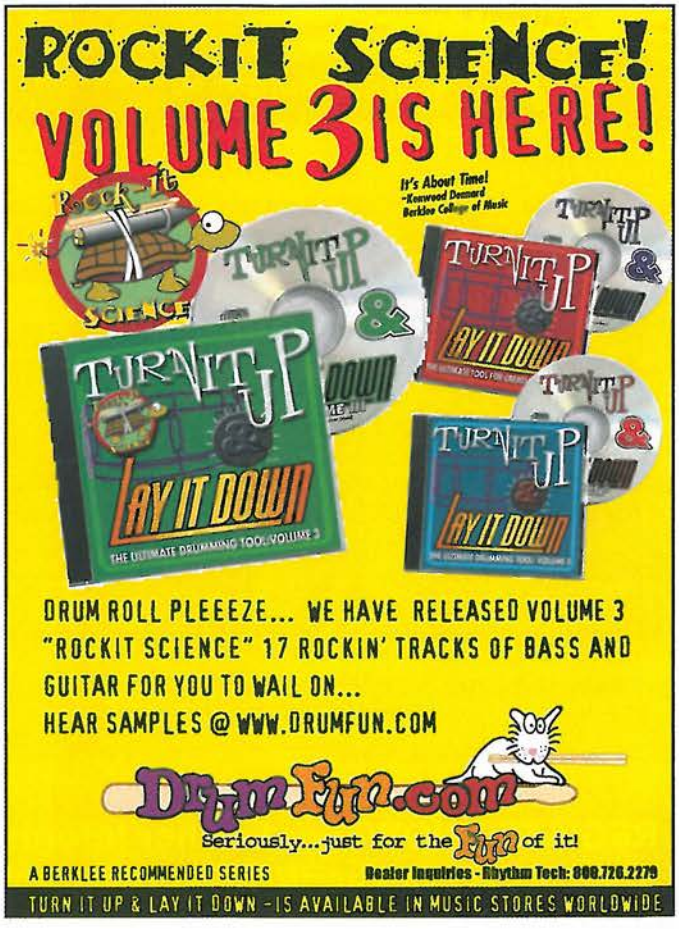
The company promoted the auction on their Web page and in print ads, hoping to raise $15,000. The final total was $60,000.

For more information, go to www.promark.com.




From left: Pro-Mark artist relations manager Kevin Radomski, Rush drummer Neil Peart, and Pro-Mark director of sales and marketing Pat Brown



# Indy Quickies

The Rhythmic Arts Project (TRAP) and its founder, Eddie Tuduri, were featured in the July 10 issue of *Parade* magazine. TRAP uses percussion to help developmentally disabled individuals realize their creative potential.

Virgil Donati recently completed three major cinics for Sabian in South Africa. He played to over 700 people in Johannesburg, 500 in Durban, and 550 in Cape Town.

Martin Olander is the winner of the Tama/Modern Drummer Jason Bittner Silver Silk Set giveaway. Martin's prize package also included Meinl cymbals, Pro-Mark sticks, and Evans drumheads.

# Who's Playing What

New Toca percussion artists include **Scott Phillips** (Alter Bridge), **Lil' John Roberts** (George Duke, Al Jarreau), and **Renzo Spiteri** (European percussion star).

Top Puerto Rican percussionist **Charlie Sierra** (Marc Anthony, Brenda K. Starr, Ruben Blades) has joined the LP artist family. Percussionist **Kurt Rasmussen** is using LP gear for his gig with Cirque du Soleil's production of *O* in Las Vegas.

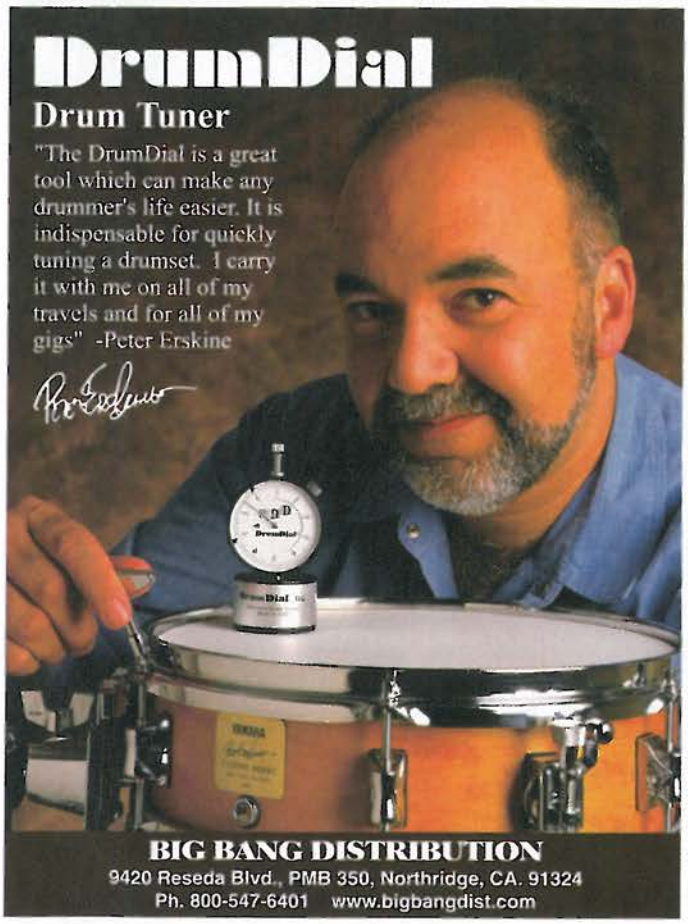
Pro-Mark is now a sponsor of the **New York City Police Department Band**, which includes the marching band, drum corps, and big band jazz unit. Sixteen of "New York's Finest" are the nucleus of the percussion section. Up & coming Cuban percussionist

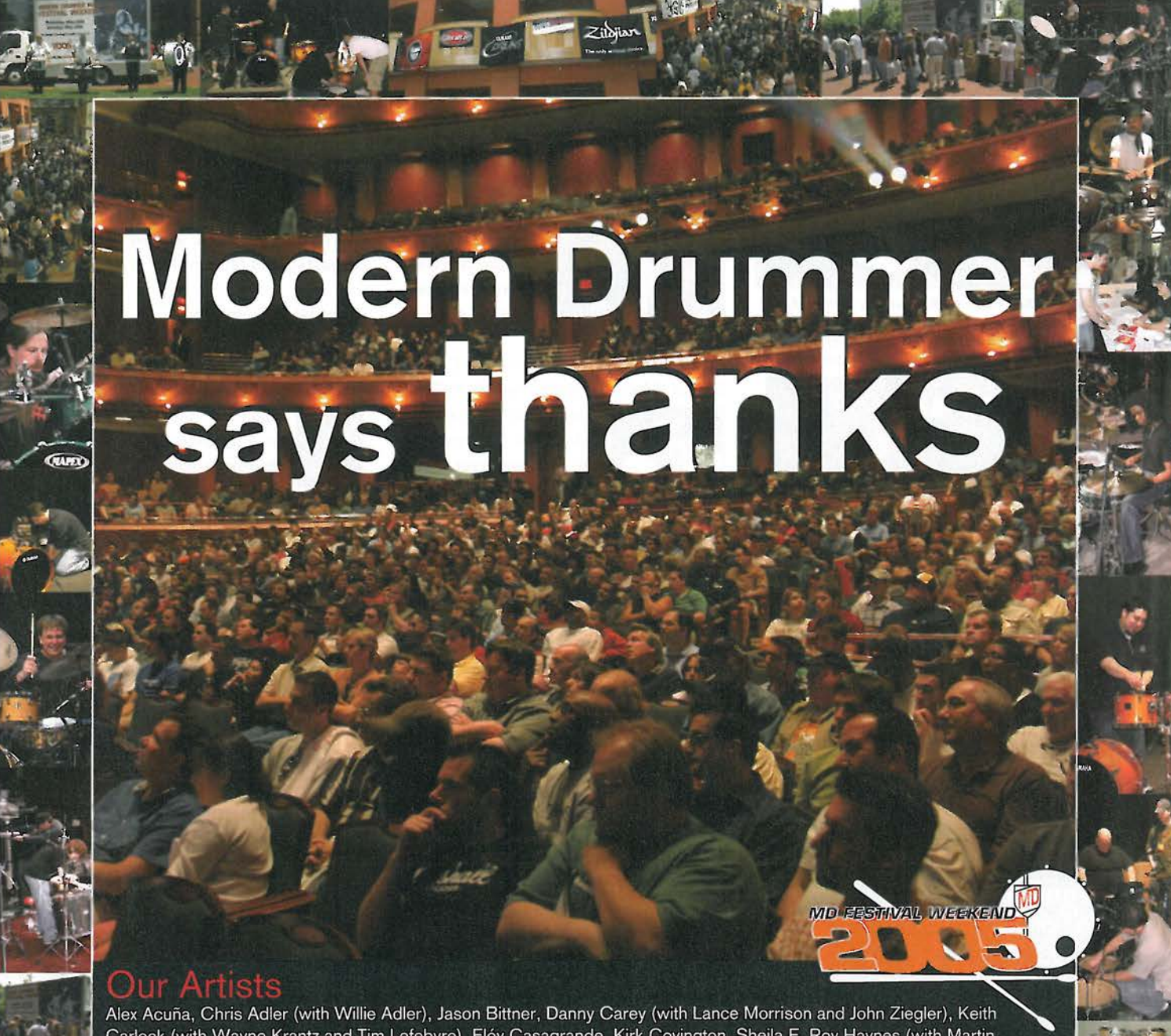
**Amel Serra** (Toots Thielemans, Gabriel Rios, Ultrasonic 7) is now using Meinl percussion, as are **The Blue Devils** drum & bugle corps. **James Branham** (Crossfade) is playing Meinl cymbals.

**Zbigniel Behemothy** (Behemoth), **Alex Straiter** (Gone To Earth), and **Rocky Semeraro** (Bishop), have recently signed as Spaun drumkit artists.

From left: Michael Werner and Leon Chiappini

**Michael Werner**, of the Metropolitan Opera orchestra, has joined Zildjian's orchestral artist roster. Michael recently visited the Zildjian factory in Norwell, Massachusetts, where he met with head cymbal tester Leon Chiappini.

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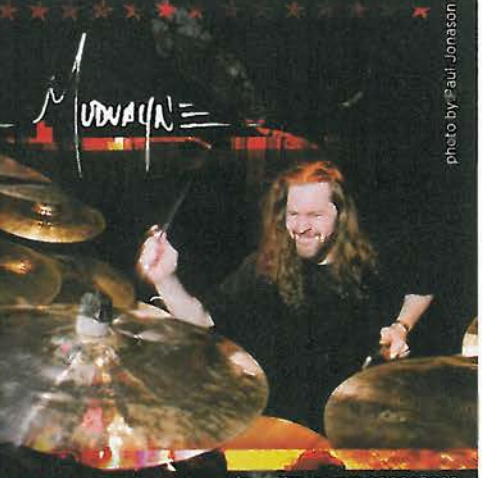

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# Shinya Miyamoto

## This NYC musical Hydra knows what it means to diversify.

On any given night, you can catch Shinya Miyamoto applying his multi-faceted skills as a drummer, producer, arranger, programmer, and engineer with a wide variety of artists throughout the Big Apple. A true musical chameleon, Shinya's drumming gigs include Andean music groups Agua Clara and Andes Fusion, funk bands Five Star Five and A.D.D., singer/songwriter Erin "EJ" Jividen, blues guitarist Roger "Hurricane" Wilson, and Fox 5's "Subway Idol" finalist Yaz Takagi. Shinya has also toured around the world with The Harlem Gospel Choir.

As a producer, Shinya's credits include projects with Toshiba/EMI artist Asuka Hayashi, Universal Japan's DJ Tonk, and pop rock band Jel, who was a finalist for *Billboard Magazine*'s Best Unsigned Band Contest in 1999 and had their music appear in the NBC television program *Another World*. Shinya has also been active mastering and editing a variety of projects for Sterling Sound, one of the world's largest music mastering plants. And that's just the tip of the iceberg....

**Hometown:** Hiroshima, Japan—Currently living in New York City
**Education:** 1994 graduate of the Berklee College Of Music in Boston, MA
**Tools:** Tama Granstar Custom and Superstar drums, Ludwig Supraphonic 400 snare, Paiste, Sabian, and Zildjian cymbals
**More info:** www.shinyamiyamoto.com

# Marcus Boeltz

## How far will you go for a gig?

"I feel very blessed to be able to keep food in the refrigerator by playing drums," says German up & comer Marcus Boeltz. This comforting affirmation comes after several years of gig searching across *three* continents. Since '98, Marcus has moved between his European homeland and sunny Southern California twice, and spent eight months in Peru. However, his career finally started to take a foothold in 2001, when, after returning to Los Angeles for the second time, he landed a gig with singer Franki Baaz. With Baaz, Marcus toured extensively and tracked drums for her disc *Passion Blue*.

**Hometown:** Herrenberg, Germany—Currently living in Munich
**Education:** 1999 graduate of the Los Angeles Music Academy
**Tools:** Tama Starclassic maple drumset, Zildjian cymbals, RMV heads, Vic Firth and Ahead sticks
**More info:** www.b-drums.com

But, never one to settle in one place for too long, Marcus is now back in Germany, making a name for himself as both a recording and performing artist. In 2003, Marcus recorded *Astral Adventures* with German gothic metal band Darkseed for Massacre/Sony Records. He has also performed and recorded with soul singer Nik Felice, and he's often called on for session work with Ego-N Music Productions and Helion Studios Media. Currently, Marcus is the drummer/co-writer for the instrumental funk/fusion trio Four '76. He also teaches at Kreativ Musikforum in Munich.

## Are You On The Move?

Prove it, and you'll appear in the World's #1 Drum Magazine. Just send us:

1. An audio or video recording of your best work (preferably with a band).
2. A high-quality photo of yourself (either close-up or behind the drums). High-resolution (300dpi) digital photos are preferred.
3. A list of your equipment.
4. A brief bio sketch including your name and age, your playing style, influences, current gigs, how often and where you're playing, what your goals are, and any special items of interest.

Send your material to On The Move, Modern Drummer Publications, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. Material cannot be returned.

# ADVERTISER INDEX

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2112 Percussion | www.2112online.com | 166 |
| AheadDrumsticks | www.bigbangdist.com | 109 |
| Alchemy Cymbals | www.alchemycymbals.com | 182 |
| American Music Drum Parts | www.amdrumparts.com | 148 |
| Aquarian Drumheads | www.aquariandrumheads.com | 9 |
| Attack Drumheads | www.universalpercussion.com | 130 |
| Audix | www.audixusa.com | 154 |
| Auralex Acoustics | www.auralex.com | 146 |
| Beni Drum Company | www.benidrums.com | 146 |
| Black Panther Snare Drums | www.blackpanthersnares.com | 16,135 |
| Bosphorus Cymbals | www.bosphoruscymbals.com | 35 |
| Brady Drum Company | www.bradydrums.com.au | 98 |
| Brush Stik | www.brushstik.com | 147 |
| Cadeson Drums | www.cadesonmusic.com | 113 |
| Canopus | www.canopusdrums.com | 169 |
| ClearSonic | www.clearsonic.com | |
| Columbus Percussion | www.columbuspercussion.com | 109 |
| Cymbal Crown Cymbal Holders | www.bigbangdist.com | 148 |
| Cymbals Only | www.cymbalsonly.com | 105 |
| D'Amico Drums | www.damicodrums.com | 149 |
| Danmar Percussion | www.danmarpercussion.com | 146 |
| ddrum | www.ddrum.com | 127 |
| Drum Center of Lexington | | 149 |
| Drum Galleria (L&M Music) | www.drumgalleria.com | 146 |
| Drum Radio | www.drumradio.com | 146 |
| Drum Supply House | www.drummaker.com | 149 |
| Drum Workshop (DW) | www.dwdrums.com | 36/37,86,90/91 |
| Drum World | www.drumworld.com | 143 |
| DrumDial | www.bigbangdist.com | 179 |
| Drumfun | www.drumfun.com | 178 |
| Drummerzone.com | | 107 |
| Drums On Sale | www.drumsonsale.com | 149 |
| Drumwind | www.drumwind.com | 125 |
| Evans | www.evansdrumheads.com | 88 |
| Vic Firth | www.vicfirth.com | 83,85,87,89 |
| Flix | www.bigbangdist.com | 148 |
| Fork's Drum Closet | www.forksdrumcloset.com | 129 |
| Gator Cases | www.GatorCases.com | 146 |
| George's Drum Shop | www.georgesdrumshop.com | 148 |
| Gibraltar Hardware | www.gibraltarhardware.com | 115 |
| Gon Bops | www.gonbops.com | 132,133 |
| Gretsch Drums | www.gretschdrums.com | 116,CV3 |
| Guitar Center Stores | | 100/101 |
| Hart Dynamics | www.hartdynamics.com | 25 |
| Hollywood Custom & Vintage Show | www.vintagedrumshow.com | 167 |
| House Ear Institute | www.hei.org | 125 |
| HQ Pecussion RealFeel Pad | www.daddario.com | 172 |
| Hudson Music | www.hudsonmusic.com | 153,155,157 |
| Idaho Percussion | www.idahopercussion.com | 149 |
| Impact | www.impactind.com | 147 |
| Interstate Music | www.interstatemusic.com | 147 |
| Istanbul Agop Cymbals | www.istanbulcymbals.com | 20 |
| Istanbul Mehmet Cymbals | www.istanbulmehmet.com | 122 |
| JazzReach | www.jazzreach.org | 168 |
| JC's Custom Drum Shop | www.jcdrums.com | 149 |
| Jim Payne | www.funkydrummer.com | 146 |
| Joe Morello | | 149 |
| KoSA | www.kosamusic.com | 147 |
| Latin Percussion (LP) | www.lpmusic.com | 95,97,99 |
| LT Sound | www.vocaleliminator.com/g.o/md | 149 |
| Ludwig | www.ludwig-drums.com | CV2 |
| Maggio Music | www.maggiomusiccenter.com | 149 |
| Mapex | www.mapexdrums.com | 21 |
| Matt Ritter Music | www.mattrittermusic.com | 166 |
| Mayer Bros. Drums | www.mbdrums.com | 147 |
| Meinl Cymbals | www.meinlcymbals.com | 67,69,71 |
| Meinl Percussion | www.meinlcymbals.com | 73,75,77 |
| Memphis Drum Shop | www.memphisdrumshop.com | 146 |
| Metallic Heads | www.metallicheads.com | 147 |
| Metrophones | www.bigbangdist.com | 143 |
| Montreal Drum Fest 2005 | www.montrealmusicshow.com | 142 |
| Moongel/RTOM | www.rtom.com | 178 |
| Music Dispatch | www.musicdispatch.com | 161 |
| MusiCares | www.grammy.com | |
| Musician's Friend | www.musiciansfriend.com | 171 |
| Musicians Institute | www.mi.edu | 140 |
| Off•Set Double Bass Drum Pedal | www.pointtremolo.com | 147 |
| Orion Cymbals | www.orioncymbals.com | 107 |
| Pacific Drums & Percussion | www.pacificdrums.com | 68 |
| Paiste America | www.paiste.com | 3,112,147 |
| Peace Drums | www.peacedrum.com | 2 |
| Pearl | www.pearldrum.com | 6/7,26/27 |
| Percussive Arts Society (PAS) | www.pas.org | 173 |
| Pork Pie Percussion | www.porkpiedrums.com | 126 |
| Precision Drum Co. | www.precisiondrum.com | 149 |
| Premier | www.premier-percussion.com | 74 |
| Pro•Mark | www.promark.com | 120,121,123,159/159 |
| Protection Racket Drum Cases | www.protectionracket.com | 98 |
| Puresound | www.puresoundpercussion.com | 72 |
| Regal Tip Drumsticks | www.regaltip.com | 137 |
| Remo | www.remo.com | 84 |
| Rhythm Tech | www.rhythmtech.com | 119 |
| Ritmo y canto | www.ritmoycanto.com | 72 |
| RMV Drums | www.rmvdrums.com | 70 |
| Rock n Roll Fantasy Camp | www.rockandrollfantasycamp.com | 177 |
| RockenWraps | www.RockenfieldMusic.com | 147 |
| Rupp's Drums | www.ruppsdrum.com | 149 |
| Sabian | www.sabian.com | 13,156 |
| Saluda Cymbals | www.saludacymbals.com | 148 |
| Sam Barnard's Drum Wrap | www.jamminsam.com | 148 |
| San Francisco Drum Co. | www.sfdrumco.com | 149 |
| Schalloch Percussion | www.musiciansfriend.com/free | 141 |
| Shure | www.shure.com | 139 |
| Slug Percussion | www.slugdrums.com | 149 |
| Tama | www.tama.com | 78/79 |
| Taye Drums | www.taye.com | 146,163 |
| The Collective | www.thecollectivenyc.com | 96 |
| The Drum Pad | www.thedrumpad.com | 149 |
| The Drum Works | thedrumworks.com | |
| The Duallist Pedal | www.triplepedal.com | 16 |
| The Original Long Island Drum Center | www.lidrum.com | 179 |
| Thunderecho Drums | www.thunderechodrums.com | 148 |
| Toca Percussion | www.tocapercussion.com | 138 |
| Trick Percussion Products | www.trickdrums.com | 15 |
| Turkish Cymbals | www.turkishcymbals.com | 136 |
| Vater Percussion | www.vater.com | 76,149 |
| VeriSonic | www.4ddai.com/vs | 126 |
| Virtual Drummer School | www.virtualdrummerschool.com | 181 |
| West Coast Drum Center | www.westcoastdrumcenter.com | 149 |
| West L.A. Music | www.westlamusic.com | 117 |
| Wuhan Cymbals | www.wuhancymbals.com | 131 |
| Yamaha | www.yamahadrums.com | 11,62/63 |
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# Nashville Noisemaker

Nashville drummer Terry Lee Bolton has been piecing together his dream kit over the past two years. It started as a basic, seven-piece Taye Tour Pro kit in Crimson Red finish. It's evolved to a point where there are now seventeen drums and seventeen cymbals. According to Bolton, "I'll shortly be adding a $4\frac{1}{2}$x6 tom between and just above the front 10" and 12" inch toms to finish off the drum setup."

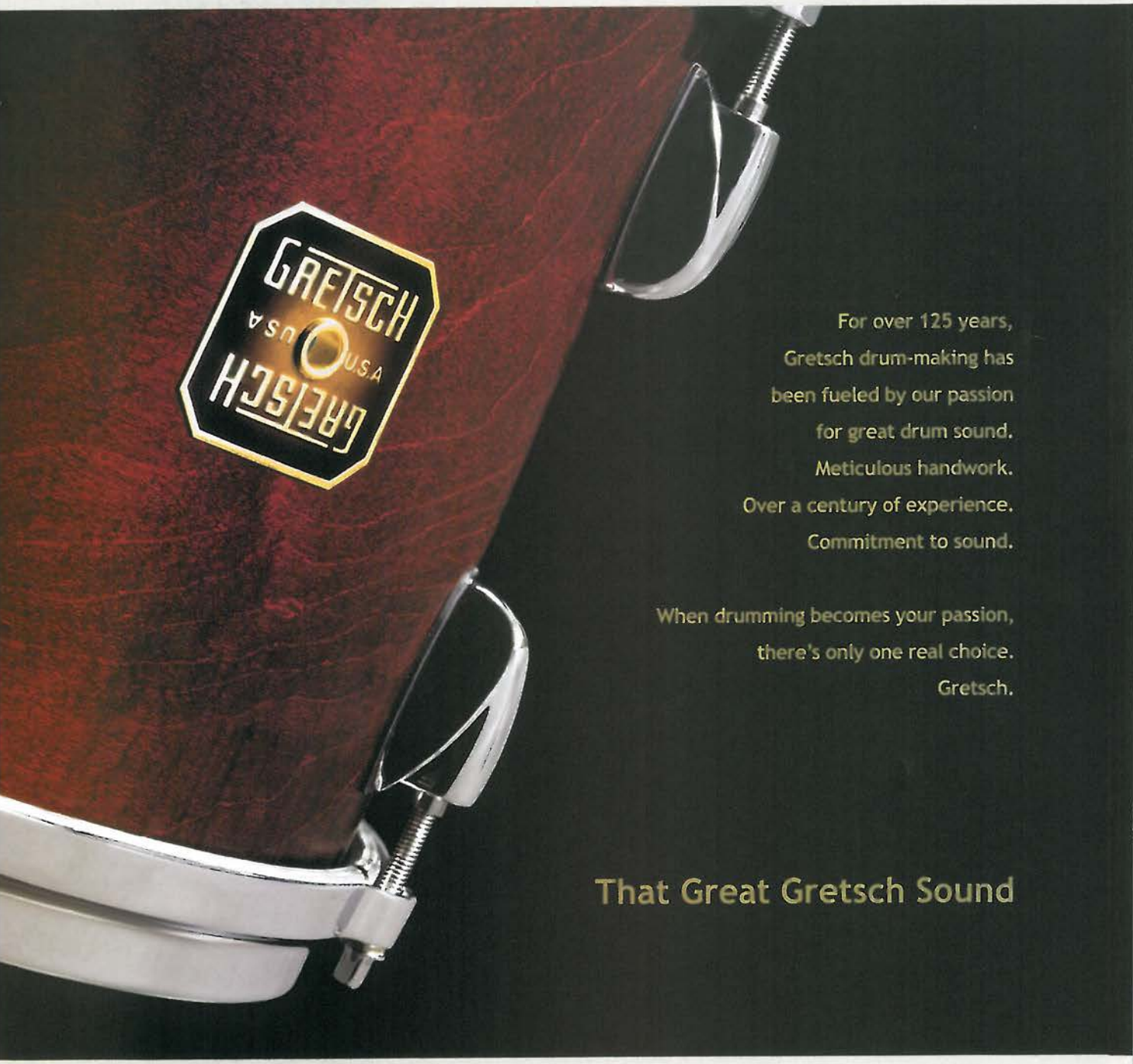
"It's not at all hard to set up," Terry continues. "I've been able to use it for everything from weekend gigs to playing at my church. Besides, wouldn't anyone love playing this kit, despite the set-up time?" At the moment Terry is using the kit mainly for recording. He has a studio CD called *Suburban Picnic* coming out, as well as an all-drumming CD called *We're Rockin' Rollers*. Information is available at www.terryleebolton.com.

Terry's massive assembly includes 5x8, $5\frac{1}{2}$x10, and 6x12 Taye Gorack toms; 7x6, 8x8, $8\frac{1}{2}$x10, and 9x12 rack toms; 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms; 5x13 and $5\frac{1}{2}$x14 snare drums, 4x12 and 5x13 timbales; 6", 8", and 10" Remo RotoToms custom-painted to match, and an 18x22 bass drum. The Sabian cymbals include two 18" HHX Evolution Ozone crashes, two 20" AA Rock crashes, an 18" AAX Metal crash, an 18" AAX Stage Crash, a 16" AAX Dark crash, an 18" AAX Chinese, an 18" AA Chinese, a 12" AA Chinese, a 21" AA Rock crash, 8", 10", and 12" AAX splashes, 14" AAX-Celerator Hats, and 13" AAX Stage Hats. Also included are one set of TreeWorks wind chimes, a 12" wind gong, and a 24" gong on a custom-made Gibraltar gong rack.

**PHOTO REQUIREMENTS**

1. Photos must be high-quality and in color. 35mm slides or high-resolution 300 dpi digital photos are preferred; color prints will be considered; Polaroids not accepted. 2. You may send more than one view of the kit. 3. Only show drums, no people. 4. Shoot drums against a neutral background. Avoid "busy" backgrounds. 5. Clearly highlight special attributes of your kit.
Send photo(s) to: Kit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Photos cannot be returned.

# Passion. Not fashion.

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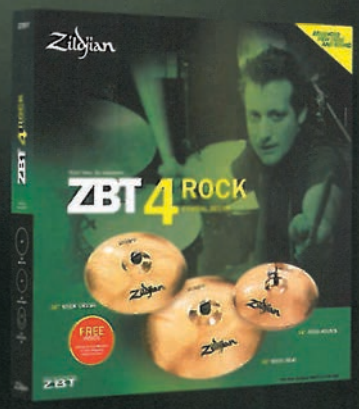


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